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ABSTRACT

This book contains papers from a conference on at-risk youth that focused on building strengths and empowering youth by giving them skills for school and life. Following an introduction titled "Motivational Strategies for Empowering Youth-At-Risk" by Dan Rea and Robert Warkentin, the papers are: (1) "The Role of Learning Environments: Social Engagement and Graduation Rates" (Sandra Bowman Damico and Jeffrey Roth); (2) "Putting It All Together: Creating Quality Learning Environments" (Cheryl Bishop); (3) "Developing a Community-Based Program To Empower Youth-At-Risk: An Evaluator's Perspective" (Julie W. Chambliss); (4) "Empowering Teachers Preparing To Work with Youth-At-Risk" (Sheila B. Marino and Rosemary Miller); (5) "Successful Strategies for Working with Discipline-Resistant Kids" (Joyce E. Divinyi); (6) "Project SAVE: Standing against Violence in Education" (Elsie P. Daniels); (7) "The Rise of Gangs in America" (Carl Spiva); (8) "Reality Check: How To Talk to Your Kids about Marijuana" (Ron Alt); (9) "The Need To Empower Youth with Critical Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Skills" (Rosemary Thompson); (10) "Transforming the Leadership Potential of Resilient Youth" (Mariam MacGregor); (11) "Breaking Down the Walls of Silence: An Expressive Arts Approach to Youth Empowerment" (Lois Leibowitz-Saperstein); (12) "Kids Law: A Practical Approach to Juvenile Justice" (John W. Biggers); (13) "The Accelerated Reader Program: A Contextualized Evaluation" (Martha Webb McGovern, Barbara Romine, Brenda Brinson, and Lyn R. Rushing); (14) "Helping At-Risk Parents and Children: The Potential of Family Literacy Projects" (Catherine A. Hansman and Johnnie Edge); (15) "A Pocket Full of Poetry: An Unlikely Approach with Middle Schoolers at Risk" (Beverly A. McKenna and Valerie A. Cole); (16) "'Dear Mr. Henshaw': A Perspective upon Writing and Risk" (Dale Purvis); (17) "PREP-IT-UP! Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program" (Era B. Hall, B. E. Powell, Marsha Anderson, Mary Jo Fayoyin, Carolyn Williams); (18) "2001 and Beyond: A Mentoring Program To Improve Access to Post-secondary Education" (Carol A. Hoffman and Daniel B. Ross); (19) "Partnerships for Success: Building on Youths' Strengths" (Paul R. Olson and Jeff Shubert); (20) "Juvenile Reparations Program" (Talandra F. Schrock); (21) "Learning from an Alternative School with Diverse Demographics" (Marilyn Salafsky); (22) "Journey toward Wholeness: Moving from Racial and Cultural Diversity to Anti-

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Racist Multiculturalism" (Leon Spencer, Melvin Hoover, and Terry Oatts); and (23) "No Safe Places: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adolescents at Risk" (Lyn Carroll and Thomas S. Serwatka). Each paper contains references. (SLD)

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WITH SKILLS FOR SCHOOL AND LIFE

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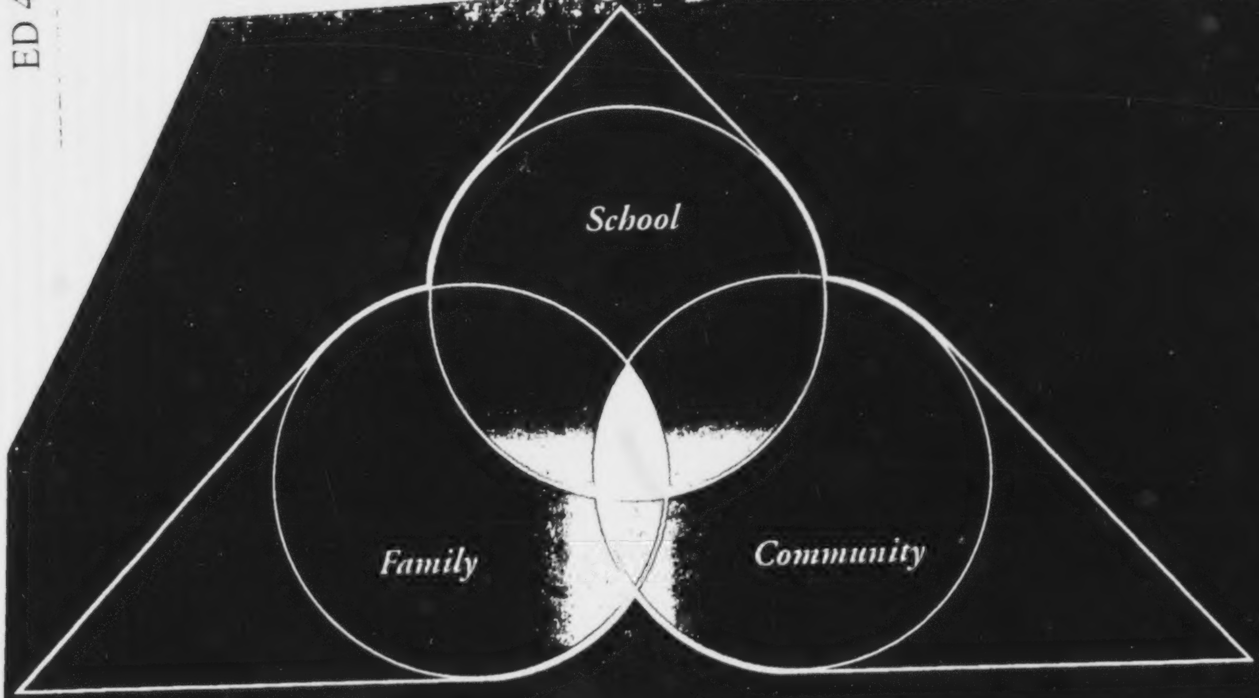

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WITH SKILLS FOR SCHOOL AND LIFE

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Americans are committed to protecting our youth from abuse and discrimination resulting from racism, sexism, and classism. Unfortunately, if homophobia is added to this list such protection may disappear. This article explores the need to address this issue.

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We would like to dedicate this book to all those who through their commitment and sacrifice have increased the well-being and quality of young people's lives in significant ways.

Introduction

Motivational Strategies for Empowering Youth-At-Risk

Dan Rea and Robert Warkentin

According to ancient Japanese legend (Toffler, 1991), power is symbolized by three objects: a sword, a jewel, and a mirror. The sword is symbolic of the power of physical force. The jewel is symbolic of the power of wealth. The mirror is symbolic of the power of self-reflection or self-knowledge. The greatest power of the three is self-knowledge. Physical power can be used to make people obey by the threat of punishment. Monetary power can be used to make people obey by the gain or loss of reward. More importantly, self-knowledge can be used to educate others so that they willingly cooperate. They cooperate because they understand what is in their best interest.

In today's schools, we still use these three types of power. To make students obey, we rely on the threat of punishment or the promise of reward. However, we often forget that the greatest power is self-knowledge which brings personal understanding. With this power, students gain a sense of self- control. They gain a feeling of self competence and mastery over their own lives which is empowering and hence its own reward. The purpose of this article is to explain the terms of this personal "empowerment" and to provide examples of how educators can use motivational strategies to psychologically empower students who are at risk.

Definition and Model of Empowerment

A frequently quoted definition of empowerment is given by psychologist Rappaport (1987):

> Empowerment is a pervasive positive value in American culture. The concept suggests both individual determination over one's own life and democratic participation in the life of one's community....Empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence....(p. 121)

For our purposes, the key words of this definition are " individual determination" and "personal control." Consistent with this definition, the educational aim is to motivationally empower students who are at risk of experiencing difficulties with personal control or individual determination. In other words, educators can encourage and teach students, who feel helpless or are out of control, to develop self-control and self-determination.

The empowerment model of education proposes that students are capable of taking control of their own lives and actively participating in their education (Deci & Ryan,1985; Glasser, 1990; Goldman & Newman, 1998; Kretzmann & Knight, 1991; Rappaport, 1987). Teachers can facilitate this capability by forming supportive partnerships with students, building on their strengths, and encouraging them to take personal responsibility for their own growth and development. According to this model, students are able to develop self-control when their needs for self-determination and self-competence are encouraged and satisfied by a supportive learning environment (Deci & Ryan,1985; Glasser, 1990). In this supportive environment, educators build on students' capacities for self-control by providing opportunities for students to think and make decisions for themselves. When teachers allow students to participate in making decisions about their learning, they become invested in the learning process and are more likely to do quality work (Glasser, 1990).

On the other hand—according to the empowerment model— students' lack of self-control is explained as a situational condition that results from an educational mismatch between students' needs and the demands of the learning environment. This mismatch can frustrate and inhibit the development of self-control. For example, an over-demanding, authoritarian teacher will likely stifle students' need for self-determination and tend to make students subservient to the teacher. In such a class, some students may well rebel against the rigid control and become discipline problems. However, in another class in which the teacher is more democratic, these same students will function very well without discipline problems.

In contrast to the empowerment model, the trait-deficit model maintains that some students are born or inflicted by a deficiency in the trait of self-control and therefore must be controlled and coerced by behavior management strategies and/or sedated by medication (Astroth, 1993; Kretzmann & Knight, 1991). This control problem is identified as a defective gene or personality deficit located inside the student. Hence, educators have to use powerful punishments and rewards to coerce and bribe these students into compliance. They may even need to use drugs to tranquillize them.

The empowerment model proposes that the problem is neither inside the student nor inside the teacher but is a function of the way the teacher and student relate to and interact with each other. This model maintains that the trait deficit model creates more problems than it solves, such as exacerbating power struggles or reinforcing dependency relationships. While the trait-deficit model offers quick fixes, the empowerment model proposes a more permanent solution of empowering students to take charge of their own lives and learning.

By emphasizing external control over students, the trait- deficit model robs students of the freedom and active involvement needed to develop self-knowledge and self-determination. In contrast, by emphasizing students' intrinsic will to learn, the empowerment model provides students with the active learning experiences needed to develop self-knowledge and self-initiative. Returning to the Japanese legend, we suggest that the trait-deficit model, like a warped mirror, distorts students' self-reflection and thereby inhibits their discovery of self-knowledge. The empowerment model, like a true mirror, supplies students with authentic reflections and thereby promotes their intrinsic discovery of self-knowledge and self-determination.

Helpless Henry

Little Henry is small for his size. He is in the fifth grade but teachers will recognize him at all grade levels. In response to new assignments he often responds—even before he tries, "I can't do it" or "I don't know how." The teacher admonishes him to try harder. His typical reply as he shrinks into his seat is, "I tried as hard as I can." The teacher repeatedly attempts to get him started, and when he finally answers a question, the teacher praises him. However, he just replies, "I was lucky" or "I guessed." At this point many teachers are ready to throw up their hands and quit because they are feeling what Henry is feeling— helpless (see Stipek, 1998 for more information on students like Helpless Henry).

There is hope for Henry and the teacher. Henry was neither born helpless nor became inflicted with an irreversible mental illness as the trait-deficit model assumes. He learned to become helpless over time and he can also learn to help himself over time. Many students develop "learned helplessness" because of repeated painful failures experienced early in life (Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993). These painful failures left them feeling a lack of personal control and gradually created a condition of helplessness and hopelessness. The good news is that learned helplessness can be replaced with "learned optimism" (Seligman, 1990). However, merely telling Henry to "try harder" is not sufficient because these comments are perceived as an invitation to more painful failure. A systematic model of empowerment is necessary.

According to the empowerment model, it is not enough for students like Henry to achieve success, they must consciously realize that they directly contributed to their own success. More specifically, they must be able to "link" the input of their skills and efforts with successful outcomes. They need to feel that they are personally causing their successes and that it is not merely random luck. The Links method offers educators four "links" for systematically strengthening students' self-knowledge that they are masters of their own destiny (Alderman, 1990).

Empower Henry with the LINKs Method

Link One: Proximal goals. Every long journey begins with a small first step. Proximal goals are the short-term, immediate goals that allow students to launch the lead step and get going. Students like Henry are easily overwhelmed by long-term, distal goals. Often they do not know how to get started. Teachers can teach them how to subdivide and sequence a complex task into short doable subtasks. With proximal goals, Henry can learn to divide and conquer what seems to be an overwhelming task.

Link Two: Learning strategies. It is not enough to tell Henry to work harder. Henry is an inefficient learner and so his working harder is ineffective. The teacher needs to teach him to "work smarter." In other words, the teacher needs to show him how to work smarter with efficient learning strategies. These learning strategies will empower him to make the most of his own learning.

Link Three: Successful experience. Nothing succeeds like success. Once students get a taste of success, they will want more because it makes them feel strong and capable. This experience of success will make it easier for them to achieve more success in the future. Ideally, the measure of success should be "how much progress I made in achieving my proximal goals," not "how I performed in comparison to my classmates."

Link Four: Attribution for success. Sometimes students succeed but they do not take personal responsibility for their success. They attribute the success to "luck" or an "easy assignment." The teacher can help these students to attribute success to their "efforts" and "learnable skills." These attributions are empowering because they are student controlled. They allow students to take personal responsibility for their own learning.

Henry is an extreme case of helplessness. However, helplessness is not an all or nothing trait. It is a learned condition that is experienced in varying degrees by all students. Hence, the Links method of empowerment can be used with all of Henry's classmates to teach them how to learn and take active control of their education. The application of this method is like a mirror that helps students to clearly see how their personal achievements are strongly linked to their individual efforts and skills. By reflecting on these powerful links, students gain the inner strength and knowledge to turn to themselves instead of others to solve their problems.

Challenge Students and Avoid Enabling

Another approach to overcoming helplessness is to avoid " educationally enabling" (Landfried, 1989). Educational enabling is a case in which helping hurts. It means to *over help* students and deprive them of the opportunity to take responsibility for their own education. When educators enable students, they rescue, coddle, or do students' work for them. Examples of enabling include: educators answering their own questions before students have time to think and make their own response; answering students' questions prematurely rather than giving hints and clues to help students answer their own questions; constantly lecturing rather than giving students a chance to discover the information for themselves; intellectually spoon- feeding students rather than challenging them to think for themselves; dumbing down the curriculum so students get better grades rather than motivating them to work for mastery; fixing students' interpersonal problems rather than teaching them how to solve their own problems; and doing children's homework for them rather than showing them how to do it for themselves. Educators who enable students may think that they are saving students from painful embarrassment or that it is more efficient to do the learning for them. In either case, they rob students of the chance to learn for themselves, and in the long run, contrary to popular sentiment, enabling is actually inefficient and embarrassing because it creates helplessness and dependency.

Students who are at risk of not learning basic skills do not need to be constantly remediated and drilled with meaningless fact sheets. This remedial help is a form of mindless enabling that results in student boredom and dependency. Rather than just practicing basic skills for the sake of practice, students need to be intellectually challenged to think and solve real-life problems (Warkentin, 1995). Learning how to solve real-life problems empowers students and motivates them to learn skills within a realistic context.

Many educators are afraid to challenge underachieving students with stimulating, real-life activities because they are concerned that the students may become frustrated and flounder or may become over-stimulated and lose control. These concerns create a motivational dilemma with detrimental effects for student empowerment (Rea, 1995). Educators need to find a happy medium between over helping students with watered down remedial work (enabling) and over challenging them to the point of frustration or over-stimulation. Educators can intellectually scaffold challenging work and prevent frustration by giving hints and clues when necessary and by providing personal support as needed. They can reduce over-stimulation by guiding students with clear expectations of appropriate behavior and prompting and cuing students before they get out of control (and teaching students to prompt and cue each other). This scaffolding and guidance will encourage students to reach greater intellectual heights and gain intellectual mastery and self-competence.

Defensive Dave and Safe Suzie

Defensive Dave is a seventh grader who is overly concerned about fitting in with his friends. He can be very bright or below average in ability. Regardless of his ability he does not want to look stupid in front of his friends or the teacher. At the same time, he does not want others to know how much he studies because they might call him a nerd, or worse yet, his lack of ability might be exposed. After all, if he has to study a lot to just get passing grades, he risks looking dumb. However, if he pretends not to study, his friends and teacher will think that he is naturally smart. When he performs poorly on homework assignments, he always has an excuse such as some emergency interfered and he did not have enough time to do his work. During class, Dave pretends to pay attention and tries to get the teacher's attention early in the lesson because he wants to answer the simple questions. Later when the teacher asks more challenging questions, he shrinks in his seat to avoid being called on. When the pressure is on him to perform, he may resort to copying other people's work to avoid appearing like a failure (see Stipek, 1998 for more information on students like Defensive Dave).

In the motivational literature, Dave's defensiveness is characterized as "performance goals orientation" (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). He is preoccupied with putting on a good acting performance to avoid making a bad impression. He is attempting to avoid failure and to save face. If the teacher makes a concerted effort to directly confront his defenses and to publicly evaluate and expose his lack of knowledge, it can embarrass him and eventually lead to learned helplessness. This coercive approach by the teacher will likely backfire and cause him to shift from failure-avoidance to failure-acceptance. The teacher needs to understand that Dave's defenses and performances are an attempt to protect his self- worth (Covington, 1992). These defenses are self-defeating and self-handicapping but they serve the vital function of protecting his ego. After we have described Safe Suzie, we will explain how the teacher can create a safe, supportive learning environment that is less likely to put Dave or Suzie on the defensive and more likely to encourage self-determination and self-competence.

Safe Suzie is a ninth grader who has a performance goals orientation like Defensive Dave, but with a major difference. While Dave avoids failure and looking stupid, Suzie wants to succeed at all cost and to look smart. She is very strategic in putting on well rehearsed performances to impress teachers with her intelligence. In fact, she is very competitive and driven to out perform others. However, she is unwilling to creatively risk difficult challenges because she might blemish her perfect record and look less intelligent to others. To protect her perfect record and her inflated ego, she plays it safe by taking easier teachers, courses, and assignments. In general, Suzie's preoccupation with ego-protection and looking smart undermines her confidence to seek and explore new intellectual challenges (see Stipek, 1998 for more information on students like Safe Suzie).

Both Dave and Suzie are developmentally at risk because of their performance goals orientation and ego involvement. They are motivated to learn not because they want to learn for themselves but merely because they want to please others or to avoid disapproval. They have not become their *own persons* or developed self-determination. Teachers can empower these students to develop self-determination and self-competence by creating supportive classrooms that encourage a learning goals orientation (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). In this classroom, the focus is on self-improvement, mastery, and learning for one's self. Students do not feel constantly pressured to get good grades to avoid looking stupid or to impress others with a smart-looking performance. According to the empowerment model, students' performance goals orientation and ego-involvement are not personal deficiencies. They are situational conditions that result from an educational mismatch between students' needs for self-determination and self-competence and the demands of the learning environment.

When students like Dave and Suzie are pressured to perform for others, the mirror of self-reflection becomes distorted and clouded with self-deception. They lose touch with who they are and merely live their lives to please or avoid the disapproval of others. The TARGETT program described in the next section helps students to shift from performing for others to learning for themselves. With this shift the clouds of self-deception are wiped away and students begin to clearly see their own inner strengths.

Empower Dave and Suzie with the TARGETT Program

Consistent with the empowerment model, the TARGETT program creates a supportive learning environment that encourages and satisfies students' needs for self-determination and self-competence. "TARGETT" is an acronym for six classroom variables which teachers can influence: Task, Autonomy, Recognition, Grouping, Evaluation, Time, and Teacher expectation (Ames, 1992; Woolfolk, 1998). In this section, we briefly explain how teachers can reorganize the learning environment with the TARGETT program and encourage students to shift from a performance goals orientation to a learning goals orientation. For more in-depth information on how to apply this program to elementary schools see Collopy and Green (1995) and for middle schools see Maehr and Anderman (1993).

Task. In the performance goals classroom, the teacher stresses memory tasks such as the rote memorization of spelling words, vocabulary words, and basic facts. Students are extrinsically rewarded for accuracy and speed of retrieval of factual information.

In the learning goals classroom, the teacher emphasizes comprehension and application tasks which allow students to understand and use what they learn. Learning is intrinsically valued because it is interesting, relevant, and challenging. In this classroom, Dave and Suzie would be motivated to understand and enjoy what they learn, rather than just accumulate meaningless facts to get rewards from the teacher.

Autonomy. In the performance goals classroom, the teacher is an authoritarian leader. In this class, students have low autonomy because the teacher is very controlling and directive. In the learning goals classroom, the teacher is an interactive or democratic teacher. The teacher seeks and supports student choice and input. While the authoritarian teachers says, "do it my way because I say so," the democratic teacher provides reasons for rules and allows students to negotiate and voice their opinion. In the learning goals classroom, Dave and Suzie would be encouraged to express their own ideas rather than just saying what they think the teacher wants to hear. In this classroom, students are trusted and encouraged rather than mistrusted and controlled.

Recognition. In the performance goals classroom, the teacher gives recognition for perfect papers, best test scores, and highest grades. A few students are publicly recognized and rewarded for their high academic grades and placed on the honor roll. The teacher uses global praise such as "good boy," "nice girl," or "good job" for the best performing students.

In the learning goals classroom, the teacher recognizes students' individual progress, improvement, and mastery of skills. Students are given personal best awards, most improved awards, or creativity awards. Emphasis is placed on taking creative risks and learning from one's mistakes rather than playing it safe and getting perfect papers. The teacher uses specific praise which provides descriptive reasons for recognition. For example, the teacher says "good job because..." or "you earned an 'A' because...." Specific praise provides informative feedback for improving skills while global praise emphasizes pleasing the teacher. In the learning goals classroom, Dave and Suzie would be recognized for their individual learning styles, efforts, and improvement rather than being compared with their classmates.

Grouping. In the performance goals classroom, students are ranked, categorized, and assigned to classes according to ability levels. Learning in these classes tends to be teacher-directed, whole group instruction. In these large groups, students compete to get the attention, recognition, and rewards of the teacher. When students are called on by the teacher in these large competitive groups, they are put on the spot to publicly perform.

In the learning goals classroom, teachers use a variety of groupings. They use cooperative groups with mixed abilities to allow student to learn from each other. They allow students to work independently on individual projects so that they can develop self-reliance. Other times they use teacher directed, whole group instruction for transmitting information. Because of this variety of grouping experiences, students such as Dave and Suzie are encouraged to learn from each other as well as from the teacher and also to develop self-reliance. In large competitive groups, learning is directed by the teacher, and students are merely passive recipients. In these large groups, students compete and perform to impress the teacher and to avoid looking stupid in front of their classmates.

Evaluation. In the performance goals classroom, students are evaluated by norm-reference tests. According to these tests, students' scores are compared to each other and ranked along a bell curve. Half of the class is labelled above average and the other half is automatically below average. In order to be above average and to get high grades, students are forced to compete and to outperform their classmates. In this classroom, high grades are a scarce resource controlled by the teacher, and only a few students can win these grades at the expense of the others. Hence, students like Helpless Henry and Defensive Dave tend to become apathetic in this classroom (Raffini, 1993). They realize that no matter how hard they work, they will always be below average.

In the learning goals classroom, students are evaluated by criterion-reference tests. These tests use an absolute standard of mastery such as 80% to 90% proficiency. The emphasis is on self-improvement and mastery of skills rather than social comparison and competition for grades. In this classroom, no one is below average. Students compete with themselves and only comparison are between their goals and their actual performances.

Everyone has the chance to achieve mastery. When students make a genuine effort, yet do poorly, they are given another chance to redo assignments or to retake tests to attain mastery. The emphasis is on learning and mastery. If students are willing to make the second effort to learn from their mistakes, they are given a second opportunity to improve and gain proficiency. In this classroom, Dave and Suzie do not need to compete on tests to out perform their classmates. The only competition is with themselves and achieving their individual goals.

Time. In the performance goals classroom, class periods and curriculum schedules are rigidly fixed by the teacher and/or mandated by the administration. Every student is required to cover the curriculum in the same sequence and at the same rate. The teacher rushes to cover the required material each day because the class periods are short and there is so much to cover. There is little time for in-depth inquiry and discussion about subjects. Given the time pressure, the teacher ends up lecturing to the chalk board rather than teaching to the students.

In the learning goals classroom, pacing and scheduling are flexible. Scheduling is dictated by the learning task and the needs of the students. Teachers are given more control over the use of time. For example, with the block schedule teachers have the freedom to allow students more extended, in-depth learning opportunities. Whenever possible students are allowed to learn at their own pace. In this classroom, Dave and Suzie have more opportunities to individualize their learning and work at their own rate. They are allowed time to explore and analyze a subject in-depth, rather than being rushed to superficially cover many subjects. This flexible approach allows them to think deeply and learn concepts for themselves rather than memorizing a list of facts just for the test.

Teacher expectation. In the performance goals classroom, the teacher has an entity view of student ability (State, Jones, Charlesworth, 1990). According to this view, students are born with a fixed amount of intelligence that does not change over time. Students either have the ability to learn or they do not. Hence class information is only presented once because "students either get it or they don't." Student errors are an indication of failure and lack of ability. High expectations are held of only students with high ability.

In the learning goals classroom, the teacher has an incremental view of intelligence (State, Jones, Charlesworth, 1990). According to this view, intelligence is modifiable by student learning, motivation, and educational enrichment. If students are intellectually challenged with stimulating educational experiences, they can learn to improve their intelligence and make the most of it. However, if students are not exposed and challenged by stimulating educational experiences, their intellectual development will likely be arrested.

The implication of this view is that all students are capable of learning in their own way and in their own time. If students do not understand class information the first time, the teacher should provide multiple opportunities and ways for student to learn. Student errors are viewed as a natural part of the learning process. They provide teachers with a diagnostic opportunity to help students to further improve. If students are not making mistakes, it may be a sign that they are not challenging themselves. High expectations are held of all students regardless of their achievement level. In this class, both Dave and Suzie are expected to learn and master the information and they are personally supported by the teacher. They are challenged to take intellectual risks and to learn and grow from their mistakes. Learning becomes a student-directed intellectual adventure rather than a public display of ability to impress the teacher.

Conclusion

For at-risk students such as Henry, Dave, and Suzie, the empowerment model provides many educational and psychological benefits. As these students experience personal empowerment, they develop an inner strength and self-determination that makes them resilient. The more they are empowered, the more resilient they become. With this resilience they are able to creatively face challenging situations and to conquer overwhelming odds (Bernard, 1993).

In a study of 17,000 tenth graders from low-income families, researchers found that "an inner locus of control" was a significant predictor of academic success (Wang, Peng, Lee, & Walberg, 1993). In other words, successful students were motivated by an inner determination to succeed, to be self- starting, and to be personally responsible for their own achievements. On the other hand, unsuccessful students lacked this inner determination and take-charge attitude. They perceived themselves to be victims of difficult circumstances and unable to control their destinies. For them school was a game of chance and the odds were impossible. However for the successful student, school was perceived as a game of skill. The odds against success were overwhelming but not impossible. They were willing to make the effort and to learn the skills necessary for success. Both groups of students came from similar disadvantaged backgrounds but the attitude of personal control enabled one group to surmount their difficulties, while the other group was paralyzed by a victim mentality.

Empowerment is an idea whose time has arrived, especially for workers in the helping professions of education, social work, counseling, and psychology (DuBoi & Krogsrud, 1996; Maack, 1997). The empowerment model is a comprehensive, well grounded model that can be used to legitimize and unify the helping professions. In the past, the helping professions have been criticized as being semi-professions when compared to the prestigious, high authority professions of medicine and law (Maack, 1997). Doctors and lawyers were perceived as authorities with an exclusive monopoly over their knowledge. When measured against the traditional standards of "high authority" and " exclusive knowledge," the helping professions appeared to be inferior to the high authority professions. For example, helpers created relationships of equality with their clients rather than relationships of dependency and gave away their knowledge rather than monopolized it.

Some have recommended that the only way to achieve legitimacy is for the helping professions to become more like the high authority professions (Maack, 1997). Hence, truly professional teachers should act like authority figures in their classrooms and impress students with their exclusive grasp of the subject. Needless to say this is not appropriate for the helping profession.

The empowerment model provides a conceptual framework that is more appropriate for the helping professions. This model transforms what originally appeared to be weaknesses (creating partnerships with your clients and sharing knowledge) into new found strengths. The empowerment model's influence may represent a paradigm shift that extends beyond the typical helping professions. For instance, many doctors are now being trained to establish partnerships with their clients and to educate their clients on how to prevent their own health problems.

This book offers educators, counselors, social workers, business leaders, law enforcement officers, and parents innovative strategies and constructive programs for empowering our youth. The organization of the diverse contributions of this book around the central theme of empowerment indicates the unifying capability of the empowerment model. Consider the following brief descriptions of some of the various topics in this book: Divinyi offers guidelines for teaching discipline-resistant children to change their behavior rather than trying to overpower them with punishment; Damico reveals how to create socially supportive learning environments and improve graduation rates; Leibowitz-Saperstein explains how the creative arts build resilient youth and help to prevent drug problems; Schrock reports on an alternative program for juvenile offenders that teaches them to repair the damage done to their victims instead of incarcerating them; MacGregor highlights a leadership program that transforms high risk youth into self-directed youth; Biggers describes how the KIDS LAW program is used to raise children's awareness about their legal rights and responsibilities; Alt gives guidance on how parents, teachers, and employers can openly talk with youth about the dangers of drugs; Spiva answers frequently asked questions about gangs and how parents and educators can prevent youth involvement in gangs; Olson discusses how to form productive partnerships with juvenile offenders; McKenna shows how to motivate underachievers to write poetry in order to express their feelings and develop their literacy, Hall reports on an enrichment program to help at-risk middle schoolers to prepare for college; and Thompson explains how to empower youth to solve their own personal problems with social and emotional skills. The comprehensive range of these topic demonstrates the wide-spread appeal and the promising future of the empowerment model.

The greatest power is the power that come from looking inside ourselves. It is the power of self-reflection. We may not like what we see when we look in the mirror, but the self-knowledge we gain enables us to learn from our mistakes, make improvements, and gain mastery over our lives. The empowering gifts of self-reflection are the personal competence to clearly see ourselves as we presently exist and the inner determination to transform ourselves into the best that we can become in the future.

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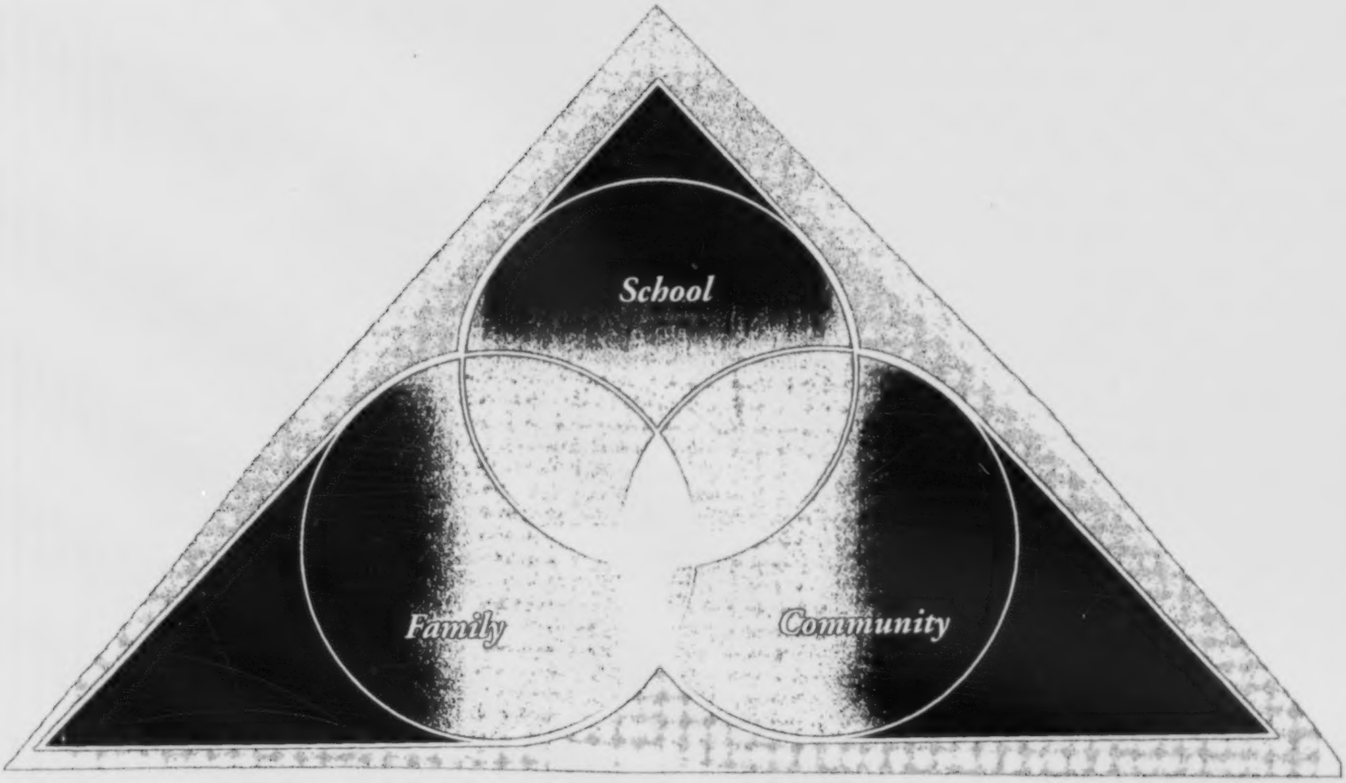
I. EMPOWERING EDUCATORS WITH A FIRM FOUNDATION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Chapter 1

The Role of Learning Environments: Social Engagement and Graduation Rates

Sandra Bowman Damico and Jeffrey Roth

This paper is based on a study completed several years ago for The Office of Policy Research & Improvement (OPRI), Florida Department of Education. At that time OPRI was concerned that the graduation rates of many Florida high schools did not seem to be improving despite increased state funding for dropout prevention programs in all 67 county-wide school districts. It appeared that these programs were working for students who were easily identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. However, a number of students failed to graduate each year who did not meet the profile of an at-risk student: they were not achieving below grade level, did not have high absentee rates, nor were they behavior problems. Thus, we were asked to determine whether there might be some school policies, rules, or practices which might be inadvertently contributing to general-track students dropping out prior to graduation.

To explore this issue we completed a set of interrelated case studies in three of Florida's school districts, each of which varied in graduation rate. One district had a high school graduation rate above the state average, one at the average, and one below it. An additional criterion for inclusion within the sample was representativeness of the state as a whole. Thus, small rural districts and Dade County (Miami) were excluded from consideration. Final district selection was cooperatively determined by the research team and the Director of OPRI. District cooperation was secured by the Florida Commissioner of Education. Two high schools within each district were selected for in depth study. Each of these schools was selected to represent the demographic diversity within the district. No inner city schools were included within the sample.

Interviews were completed with 178 adolescents from the six sample high schools. Since time constraints did not permit interviewing students at all grade levels, interviews were limited to those in the tenth and twelfth grades. Individual interviews were conducted with 101 general-track students, while 77 honors and advanced placement students were interviewed in groups of four to six. The group interviews were designed to examine the extent to which perceptions of school varied across achievement levels. The final student sample proportionally represented the ethnic diversity of secondary pupils in the state. In each of the six high schools a sampling of administrators, counselors, and teachers were interviewed as well. Over 500 hours of interview data were collected for this study.

Our review of the at-risk, dropout, and academic engagement literature persuaded us that the concept of engagement provided a sound explanatory schema for understanding adolescent responses to school. Thus, the interview guides which we developed were specifically designed to tap various dimensions of social and academic engagement. The social engagement portion of the interview guide, which is the subject of this paper, asked a series of questions about school climate, student behavior, interpersonal relationships and extracurricular activities. The interview questions were open ended enough to elicit individual experiences and beliefs while containing enough structure to permit comparisons across respondents.

Elsewhere we have provided extensive description of the study's methodology and discussion of some of our findings (Damico & Roth, 1993a, 1993b, 1994). This paper concentrates on the differences between the learning environments in high and low graduation high schools as described by adolescents. As we have read and reread the student interviews, our understanding of the impact of social climate on learning environment has increased. The differences between the high schools in the district with a graduation rate above the state average and those with a rate below the state average are frequently striking. (These same dramatic differences are also apparent in the analysis of teacher interviews; Damico, Roth, & Conn, 1998.) At the outset, however, we would like to emphasize that persistence to graduation is a complex process involving a close interrelationship between " academic" and "social" engagement. For instance, students do not see relationships with teachers as independent of instructional style or effectiveness. As one young man described the affect that accompanies cognition:

> The teacher I learn the most from doesn't just say "outline the chapter;" he goes over it, tells you a story about it, makes you understand it. He doesn't snap at you for asking a question.

The findings from our analysis are summarized in Table 1. Nine themes emerged from our analysis: Mission Statement: School Policies and Rules; Academic and Personal Support Systems; Extracurricular and Co-Curricular Activities; Student Recognition and Awards; Orientation toward Students; Primary Relationships; School Affiliation; and School Building. Each theme is discussed in turn.

Mission Statement

After interviewing students, teachers, counselors, and principals we concluded that one of the main distinguishing characteristics of high graduation schools was a well thought out mission statement *which guided practice and decision-making*. This conclusion, while not derived exclusively from student interviews, was included on this table because it sets the tone for much of what happens in schools that affect student social engagement with learning.

All schools, of course, have mission statements. In fact, one school had their statement engraved on metal plaques strategically placed around the building. These

Table 1
Social Engagement and High School Learning Environments:
Differences Between High and Low Graduation Districts

High Graduation Districts	Low Graduation Districts
Mission Statement • Guides practice • Well known to students & staff	*Mission Statement* • Included an accreditation and annual reports • Doesn't inform practice • Unknown or doubted by students & staff
School Policies & Rules • Clear and widely communicated • Consistently enforced • Perceived as fair, nondiscriminatory	*School Policies & Rules* • Vague and not well-known • Enforced idiosyncratically • Perceived to be discriminatory
Academic and Personal Support Systems • A variety of programs, such as tutoring and homework hotlines, readily available • Students and teachers know how to access them • Guidance offices seen as accessible and helpful to students	*Academic and Personal Support Systems* • Teachers & students unaware of support or programs available • Students & teachers unsure how to access available systems • Guidance office seen as not accessible or helpful
Extracurricular & Co-curricular Activities • Formalized recruitment arrangements to involve a wide variety of students in activities • Policies to level the playing field & encourage wide participation in student governance • Scheduled into school day on a regular basis	*Extracurricular & Co-curricular Activities* • No formalized recruitment mechanism • Recruitment through "word of mouth" • Some students "discouraged" from participating in high visibility activities such as yearbook and student newspaper • Student government controlled by the same small clique of students every year • All participation after normal school hours
Student Recognition and Awards • Wide range of activities & accomplishments • Recognition viewed as open/available to anyone	*Student Recognition and Awards* • Athelatics primary way to receive recognition • Conferring of in school student awards seen as a result of teacher bartering
Orientation Toward Students • Incentives for student compliance • Second chances for students who try • Graduation seen as a cooperative goal between student and school	*Orientation Toward Students* • No incentives for compliance; threats for noncompliance • Suspicious of student motivations
Primary Relationships • Teachers viewed as helpful and liking • Students report having many friends at school • Some friendships across racial or ethic groups	*Primary Relationships* • Teachers viewed as not liking students • Students report having few friends at school • Sharp divisions among students based on race, ethic group, or SES
School Affiliation • Strong sense of "school spirit" • Positive attitude toward academic and social aspects high school • Sense of belonging or attachment to school	*School Affiliation* • Sense of "school spirit" lacking or not wide spread • Negative attitude toward school • No sense of identification with school
School Building • Positively worded signs around the building • Very little or no graffiti • Clean and trim interior & exterior	*School Building* • Negatively worded signs inside & outside the building • Conspicuous amounts of graffiti • Building appearance varying from slightly unkempt to run down

obvious displays, however, did not necessarily mean that the school had a mission that guided practice. The high graduation district's schools had missions which were well known to participants and which were referred to when making policy decisions. In one school in particular, the mission as outlined by the principal was echoed in statements by teachers and students. It was well known and acknowledged as important. In contrast, an assistant principal in one of the low graduation high schools said he " wished he knew what the mission of the school was."

School Policies and Rules

Based on our reading of the literature on academic engagement we discovered that many schools and districts enacted policies and established procedures for their implementation which were counterproductive. School Boards adopt policies which they believe will increase graduation rates: they sound reasonable. Unfortunately, these policies rarely are revisited to determine if they are having unintended consequences.

High graduation districts had a few well-developed rules which were clearly communicated to teachers, students, and parents. More importantly, they were believed to be fairly enforced. In contrast students enrolled in low graduation district schools believed that the captain of the football team would receive very different treatment than a "regular" student. In other words, who you are was a factor in determining consequences for rule infractions.

Consistency of enforcement was an issue as well. A frequent comment we heard from students in the low graduation district's high schools was that the dean's office to which they were referred determined their punishment. Some deans were known to be harsh and unfair in their administration of punishment while others seemed not to take the rules seriously. Consequences for misbehavior thus became a matter of "luck of the draw." A white male in a low graduation school summed it up this way:

> It depends on who you go to. If I go to my counselor, he don't care. He just writes down an excuse. You can get 100 tardies and nothing happens. But if you get sent to someone else, you can get two or three tardies and end up in Saturday School. It just depends on what dean you get.

In response to a question about the three most important rules in the school, students tended to give predictable responses, though those in low graduation schools frequently mentioned "dress code." A response from a black male in the high graduation district, however, echoes the sense of collective responsibility of his school's administrators and teachers.

> They [the rules] are so built in I can't even remember. Maintain yourself with pride and respect at all times; remember that you are representing not only yourself and your school, but also your family.

Academic and Personal Support Systems

The high graduation schools had a variety of programs, such as tutoring and homework hotlines, in place to help students succeed academically. The availability of these systems was well known to both teachers and students along with knowledge of who could access them and how. The guidance office was seen as a genuine resource. The football coach in one of the high graduation schools held a mandatory-attendance study hall for the first 45 minutes after school each day for team players. Players were to use the time to complete homework assignments. Tutors were provided for those students who were experiencing academic difficulty.

The low graduation high schools tended to have few support programs in place to meet the needs of their students. Interviews across students and teachers revealed incomplete knowledge about what was available and who could take advantage of services. And, general track students saw the guidance office as concerned not with them but with the college-bound and troublemakers.

Extracurricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Students face two sets of difficulties in deciding to participate in a school's activity program. First, they must be able to stay after school in order to attend meetings. Second, they have to know what activities are available and if they would be welcomed if they wanted to join. Most schools don't devote time or attention to either of these two issues with the result that extracurricular activities are heavily populated by middle class, college bound students. The high graduation schools in our sample, however, were not passive about this issue. They scheduled activity periods during the school day twice a month for those who didn't have after school transportation or who worked. These schools also had well developed activity recruitment strategies including a week of club booths set up in the gym. Campaigns for elected positions such as class president were controlled as well. Students were forbidden to have professionally produced flyers plastering school walls during the election campaign — a frequent practice in the low gradation schools. The high graduation schools supplied students with poster board and paints to be used in campaigns. In other words, they worked to level the playing field. Moreover, a number of students reported that they would never have considered running for elected office if their teachers hadn't encouraged them to enter the race.

The low graduation schools held club meetings after school and did not have well developed plans for student recruitment into them. Students were encouraged to join by other classmates or teacher sponsors. As one student said, "Mostly you find out through your friends." And an Hispanic female said, "I was supposed to be in the Spanish club...but I don't have any way to get home. If I had a car, I'd be in it."

Student Recognition and Awards

Walk through the front entrance of most high schools and you will be greeted by a trophy case celebrating the athletic triumphs of the school team. But the range of activities for which students can be recognized is significantly broader than team sports. Many schools, however, don't seem to value other kinds of collective activities. When the announcement of the school choir's success in statewide competition appears in 12- point type on a single sheet of 8"x11" paper taped to the wall outside the principal's office, you have to wonder how much value has been placed on this activity. The celebration of athletic prowess only is what we found in one of the low graduation high schools. Athletics appear to be the only school activity worth publicizing. Moreover, students attending these schools believe teachers play favorites in the awarding of in-school honors.

> One student who is very bright and gets all A's in his AP classes has never been selected as "Hawk of the Month" because teachers think he wouldn't be a good representative of the school, the way he dresses and the type of music he listens to. A lot of teachers judge students by music. If the teachers don't approve of you, it doesn't make any difference what you do. They aren't going to select you as " Hawk of the Month."

In contrast, the principal in one of the high graduation schools had assigned the assistant principal with gaining in- school and local recognition for multiple student activities. Every week the local newspaper contained at least one news item relating positive activities or accomplishments of the school's students. A large bulletin board had been strategically placed in the hall by the cafeteria where students waited in line for lunch. This board had a rotating compilation of activities and awards of students including clippings from the local paper. Trophies gained in competitions besides athletics were included in the entrance hall. At this school no student expressed the belief that bias entered into any award of recognition.

Orientation Toward Students

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the high graduation schools was their facilitative orientation toward students. Rather than setting up an elaborate system of punishments for infractions of rules, the schools offered incentives for compliance. They were also ready to offer students a second chance. As a white male in one of these schools said,

> Most of my teachers like me because my attitude has changed. I used to skip school all the time. I didn't want to be here. My ambitions were very low...Not so much about life, but I didn't care about school.

And another white male added:

> I'd give this school a letter grade of 'A' because they don't seem to lose interest in you even if you lose interest.

Unfortunately, students attending low graduation schools could not say the similar things about their schools. One of the schools was organized around the belief that students needed to be constantly watched. This belief was translated into the video taping of students in the cafeteria to insure they put their trash in the provided barrels. Administrators, teachers, and counselors were assigned times to patrol the halls with walkie-talkies, and very much in evidence was an armed sheriff's deputy. Summarizing the suspicious orientation towards students in this school a female in advanced placement classes said:

> Having all these guards and all those people with walkie talkies doesn't make me feel comfortable. School should be a place for learning...here they are always waiting for a crime to strike. It's almost like they are saying, 'There will be fights,' and they're waiting for fights to happen.

Primary Relationships

Students in high graduation schools continually referenced the support and help they received from faculty, administrators, and guidance. They also talked about their classmates in positive tones. These schools were permeated by a helping, caring ethos: "I've gone to other schools on school days and can see that its a different environment and that's why I like this school. There aren't any loners here; we all have lots of friends and know everyone." In contrast the low graduation schools were marked by unfriendly, sometimes hostile relationships. "This school is geared to making people drop out. A lot of them [teachers] don't know how to teach. They are bored themselves and they pass this on. Some of the teachers tell us they don't really want to be doing what they are doing." Another student at this school describes the situation this way: "Teachers don't say in words that you are dumb. They'll speak to you in ways that show that you can't learn anything. They'll say you don't know anything."

School Affiliation

The concept of school affiliation refers to adolescents' sense of loyalty and attachment to school. It is operationalized by things schools do to help students gain a sense of belonging to the institution. Frequently affiliation is confined to notions of school spirit and revolves around sport teams. A sense of affiliation helps insure young adults will persist to graduation. "Students have a lot of school spirit. A lot of people show up at sports and activities like homecoming and the homecoming game. A lot of school spirit like the hall decorating contest. The senior class has won the hall decorating prize every year since they were in the 9th grade." It appears that the low graduation schools do not see the importance of this dimension of schooling, or perhaps have not been successful in addressing it. A black female at a low graduation school said, School has to give students a reason to come to school. If they wake up and hate school, then they aren't going to be happy to come...Schools need to help students be successful if they want them to come."

School Building

The messages that the physical environment conveys to students, faculty and the public should not be dismissed as unimportant. In our visits to schools we found negatively worded signs, graffiti, trash in halls and on the grounds, and evidence of needed repairs. However, the principal at one of the high graduation district insured that graffiti was removed as soon as it appeared. If it couldn't be cleanedfediately, she had it covered. A class in another high gradation school was engaged in a project to xeroscape the school grounds.

In responses to a question about what they would remember about the school after graduation, students frequently referenced the physical plant: the library, a big sign outside the building proclaiming "The Home of the Tigers," or an atrium where students gathered during lunch. High graduation schools realize that their physical plant projects the knowledge learning environment that they have constructed.

Conclusion

In closing we would like to emphasize that students are an excellent, generally untapped, source of information about a school's learning environment. We strongly urge schools to think seriously about ways they can involve them in helping make schools a better place in which adolescents can learn. We would further hope that this survey of customer satisfaction would not be a one time project, but an ongoing process. ■

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Chapter 2

Putting It All Together: Creating Quality Learning Environments

Cheryl Bishop

The puzzling question to the public and the nation has been "Why can't Johnny (and Janie) learn?" The problems were first identified in the report *A Nation at Risk* (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984) . Since the release of that report various groups from education to government, business, and the general public have tried to put the pieces together to find a solution for this age old question.

Changing demographics have increased the population of students considered "at risk." Students who may be at risk of encountering school failure are those experiencing poverty, single parent homes, neglect, and lack of adult protection and nurturance (Hodgkinson, 1991). Schools need to continue changing in order to meet the diverse needs of the student population. The educational system of the past evolved from the need to produce workers for the Industrial Revolution. These workers were students who learned to sit in orderly rows, absorb facts, and to learn at rates deemed appropriate for the group (Goodlad, 1992). Students of the Information Age need to be able to problem solve, work with teams, and think critically (Schrag, 1993). Meeting these new demands requires a rethinking of our current educational system. A solution may be found by examining schools from a systems perspective. Elements of the systems perspective are found in the initial reform movements based on quality, effective school tenets, and systems thinking.

Current Reform

The quality movement was fostered by Deming, the father of Total Quality Management, and others such as Juran, Crosby, and Feigenbaum. Total Quality Management (TQM), popular in redesigning business, is characterized by continuous improvement of processes and the elimination of waste. Philosophically, TQM fits education well also, but it is not often applied to schools. According to Deming (1993), the school system should be a place where students are motivated by the joy of learning rather than the fear of failing grades, low class ranking, or not earning gold stars. It should be a system that recognizes individual differences between pupils and between teachers.

Various authors (Glasser, 1992; Lezotte, 1992; Sallis, 1993; Snyder, 1994), have applied the philosophy of quality to the work culture of schools, creating a framework to transform schools into dynamic and energetic educational environments. This transformation can be identified in how schools meet the needs of its customers, the students, parents, and community at large. Elements of quality effective schools include a shared purpose, a stimulating and safe environment, and the expectation that all children can learn.

In education the systems view of schooling identifies the interrelated and interdependent parts. According to Snyder (1994), systems thinking is central to quality cultures and will lead to the demise of independent and isolated functions. Systems thinking is a way of seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, and for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots" (Senge, 1990). Systems thinking is the discipline that ties the other disciplines together. A healthy system works toward a common goal and will constantly respond to feedback, needs, and aspirations.

Within the quality movement is the belief that schools have as their primary mission the successful learning of all students. Learning can be defined by instruction, education, and the acquisition of wisdom, knowledge, and skill. Initially the purpose of schools was to provide instruction in values, and religious beliefs. Knowledge was equated with morality. Education was seen as a remedy to "crime, war, poverty...injustice, racketeering, political corruption, race hatred, class conflict, and just plain original sin" (Counts, 1969, p. 3).

Today the reform movement continues to reflect the same belief that education, (learning) can cure the ills of our time. Examples can be seen in the push for higher standards so that Americans can compete within the global economy and meet the growing needs of an Information Age. But the theories of learning, as reflected in the curriculum of schools, have not changed. Learning is still acquired within a fixed time and at a fixed rate. Standards are rigid resulting in a form of ranking and sorting. Students whose ability to acquire knowledge are in discordance with the school system are either placed in a separate educational setting or removed from the system entirely.

Each of us has experienced the school system at some level. Our perceptions are defined by information processed and interpreted from previous experience. This experience could have been either positive or negative. How we adapted to the educational process determined our success within the school system. Currently, researchers on learning are beginning to explore how our brain obtains information and how that information is used in the acquisition of knowledge. The new theories on learning are in conflict with our ways of delivering instruction within the present structure of the school system.

A New Way of Thinking

Quality learning environments are a result of a shift in thinking about students and learning problems. Learning problems are viewed as environmental problems rather than problems within the learner. Teachers are encouraged to modify or change the learning environment. This environment is modified by changing the organizational culture of the classroom and/or the school. For example a recent study (Bishop, 1997), which examined two groups of schools with different rates for referring students for placement in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Programs, found that the schools which referred fewer students for ESE programs were better able to meet student needs. These schools were meeting student needs without relying on labeling and categorizing of students. Low referral rate schools in the study demonstrated a new cultural belief that all children can learn, had organizational structures that allowed for flexible curriculum, had leaders that encouraged and supported risk taking and innovation, and teachers who collaborated and used group decision making processes.

The common characteristics, features, and dimensions of the organizational culture of schools, which referred fewer students for ESE programs, demonstrated a quality learning environment. The environments viewed from a systems perspective exhibited supportive, flexible, and adaptable structures that met the diverse needs of the school population. Three distinct characteristics were identified: *systems thinking, visionary leadership,* and *collaboration.*

Putting the Pieces Together

The schools with low referral rates in the study maintain equilibrium through balance and flexibility, the process noted by Weick (1969) as a means by which an organization continues to exist. Equilibrium was maintained by a *system wide focus* on student achievement. Schools with low referrals viewed problems as system problems caused by environmental limitations. Systems thinking was also observed in the interdisciplinary learning programs, the formation of teams to provide a more flexible structure, and the integration of programs designed around a common goal.

Leaders of the schools which had lower referral rates for ESE programs viewed themselves as change agents. As *visionary leaders* they managed the change process through strategic thinking and planning driven by the belief in student success. The leaders and staff bonded around a common identity that was demonstrated in the way teachers and administrators implemented programs and services that showed a commitment to meeting the needs of all students.

The final piece to the puzzle that linked the other parts was *collaboration.* This was demonstrated through co-teaching, peer facilitation, teams, and supportive networks with parents and the community. Structures were in place that allowed for collaboration to occur naturally in each of the school settings. A feeling of respect, trust, and a sense of community was also noted in the schools with lower referral rates. Networks with outside agencies, a sign according to Snyder and Acker-Hocevar (1996) of a shift from a "me" to a "we" culture, were being developed in the schools with low referral rates.

Putting all the pieces together to create quality learning environments requires a shift in thinking and involves all the environments, which have an impact on students within the educational system. Schools need to have a strong belief in students' ability to learn, teachers need to have a high involvement level in the decision making process, and the learning environments must have supportive structures. According to Lipsky and Gartner (1989) school reform should place the student as the focal point for change. For this to occur the outcomes and goals of the environments within the systems of schools must be aligned.

As demonstrated by the schools in the reported study (Bishop, 1997), a shift in systems thinking is possible. Evidence from interviews and document analysis showed that the dominant cultural value of these schools was *all children have strengths and can learn* and that this guided their approach to teaching and learning. New structures, processes, and strategies emerged from the positive school vision to reach and teach all students. Work teams were given increased ownership for their work processes and products. The schools within the low referral rate group demonstrated what Stainback and Stainback (1992) described as "inclusive settings." An inclusive setting meets the diverse range of students' needs within the regular classroom setting. These schools model respect and appreciation for the full spectrum of human beings. They are examples of school cultures which are evolving toward quality and are demonstrating a desire to meet the needs of all students. ■

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Chapter 3

Developing a Community-Based Program to Empower Youth-At-Risk: An Evaluator's Perspective

Julie W. Chambliss

This paper presents the perspective of a statewide evaluator of youth-at-risk programs on how to develop a community-based prevention program that empowers youth, provides theory and empirical research grounding and is practical and feasible to implement. Beginning with a constellation of risk and protective factors for youth, the paper elucidates the steps to develop a program model in which program activities and outcomes are logically linked together and which meets the criteria for successful prevention program that empower youth-at-risk.

Many years experience as an applied researcher evaluating prevention programs for youth-at-risk across the state of Georgia has taught me the value of addressing some simple questions when approaching the development of a program to empower youth-at-risk and prevent delinquency. (1) Can the program logically be expected to achieve its desired outcomes? Is it theoretically sound? (2) Practically, is the program feasible? Can it be implemented as planned? The answers to the first questions lie in the thoughtful development of a program logic model, while the answers to the second involve a careful examination of the contextual conditions in which the program will operate.

Involving Youth in Program Development

The most important way to empower youth when developing a program is to include them in all aspects of the program development process. This is critically important to ensure program effectiveness. Unfortunately, many youth programs fail because they are not relevant to the concerns of the youth they are designed to serve and the programs have not been tailored to their unique needs (Nation, Crusto, Kumpfer, Wandersman, Seybolt, Morrisey-Kane & Davino, 1998); the program developers failed to involve youth in program planning and did not do the market research necessary to ensure youth participation. If youth are not involved in the process of developing the program, it can not be expected to be relevant to their concerns.

Involving youth in program development not only ensures program relevancy, it empowers youth by modeling for them the importance of the planning process, and facilitates the development by youth of some fundamental skills in data gathering and planning, while simultaneously maximizing program planning resources. In addition to gathering data, other meaningful roles for youth during the planning process includes meeting with community members to gather community support for the proposed program and serving as representatives to adult collaborative groups (The National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations, 1991).

Using A Risk and Protective Factors Approach

Risk factors are typically demographic, biological or psychosocial factors which have been empirically linked to particular problem behaviors (Kumpfer, Shur, Ross, Bunnell, Librett & Millward, 1993). Similarly, protective factors are those which have been empirically shown to strengthen youth, helping them to avoid problem behaviors. A focus on risk and protective factors when developing a prevention program makes it more likely that the program will be effective in interrupting the causal processes that are responsible for producing the problem behavior (Hawkins, Catalano & Brewer, 1995). For example, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence has published the list of individual, peer, family and school/community level risk factors for youth violence displayed in Table 1 (Guerra & Williams, 1996). There are similar inventories of risk factors for other youth problem behaviors such as use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, teen pregnancy, and sexual assault (For example, for risk factors refer to Ayers, Hawkins & Catalano's *Encyclopedia of Indicators to Measure Drug Use and Risk Factors for Drug Use*, 1991 or the National Institute of Drug Abuse's free publication: *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents*, 1997; for protective factors see Perry & Murray, 1985). If you compare the lists, you'll note that the risk and protective factors for a variety of problem behaviors overlap; when a youth is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, for example, he/she is more at risk for either committing or being a victim of an act of violence (Hayes & Emshoff, 1993; Crowell & Burgess, 1996). *Research has demonstrated that exposure to multiple risk factors increases risk exponentially; therefore, to be most effective programs should use multiple strategies to address multiple risk and protective factors* (Brewer, Hawkins, Catalano, & Neckerman, 1995).

Assessing the Needs of Youth in Your Community

The starting point for program development is meeting needs. As you begin to conceptualize a program, address the questions, "How are the youth this program will serve at risk?" and "What factors will serve to protect and strengthen them?" The most important way of answering these questions is conducting a community-based needs assessment to determine the extent of the risk and protective factors in your community among the youth the program will serve and determining what approach the community thinks should be taken in the program. *This step is critically important for mobilizing the community- based support the program will need to be effective.*

As part of the needs assessment process, you should gather archival data for the specific population and geographical area the program will serve. When reviewing

Table 1
Risk Factors for Youth Violence

Individual Risk Factors
- Poor academic skills
- Impulsivity
- Substance use
- Poor social problem solving skills
- Inability to understand the perspective of others
- Poor conflict resolution skills
- Difficulties in understanding the moral consequences of actions

Family Risk Factors
- Inconsistent discipline
- Reliance on coercion
- Harsh or abusive discipline
- Poor monitoring of activities
- Insecure attachments
- Defensive communication
- Deviant shared values
- A high percentage of negative interactions
- Low levels of emotional closeness
- Inefficient use of family resources

Peer Risk Factors
- Low social status
- Rejection by peers
- Gang involvement
- Shared deviant peer norms
- Associated with delinquent peer groups

School/Community Risk Factors
- Lack of student/parent involvement
- Low academic achievement
- Lack of social organization and social support
- Few opportunities for recreation
- Unemployment and economic disparities
- High levels of community crime
- Availability of firearms

youth-at-risk grant applications, I frequently come across those which have simply included broad-based demographic information in the needs assessment section for a geographical area which does not match the program's target area. For example, the program developers may be asking for funding for a neighborhood-based after-school program at a local middle school, yet they only include demographic information gathered at the county level. What's needed is not the number of children without supervision in the hours after school in the county as a whole, but rather the number in the school to be served by the program.

During the needs assessment process, program developers should also talk to as many key community leaders as possible, individually or in small groups, face-to-face or by phone to obtain their insights about the proposed program. It's also highly desirable to conduct a simple community survey; this is a great task for the youth who are working with you on the program's development. It's particularly important to find out what the perceived needs of the people in your community are and how they think the needs could best be met. What values do community members hold with regard to the problem behavior? What norms are operating in the community which may directly or indirectly support the continued existence of the problem behavior?

Another of the goals of the needs assessment process should be to prioritize the risk and protective factors according to areas of greatest need. Finally, an additional aspect of the needs assessment process is to conduct a resource inventory to assess the resources that are needed and those that are available for addressing the problem of interest. (For an excellent, free guide to community-based prevention needs assessment, refer to NIDA's *Community Readiness for Drug Abuse Prevention: Issues. Tips and Tools*, 1997).

As an example of the importance of community-based needs assessment for program development, consider this. You may have read that nationwide the time period during which youth are at greatest risk for committing a crime is weekdays between 3:00 and 6:00 pm; therefore you may think that "poor monitoring of youth activities" and "few opportunities for recreation" are two of the risk factors your program should address with an after- school program. But first you need to gather data about what the time period of greatest risk is in your community. If it is Friday and Saturday nights, an after school program is not what you should be planning. Or it may be that the one of the causes of poor parental monitoring of children in your community is due to the fact that parents lack knowledge of effective monitoring practices; therefore it may be advisable to include a parental education component in the program.

Basing the Program on State-of-the-Art Research About Effective Prevention Programs

After conducting a community-based needs assessment, the next step in effective local level program development is gathering information on state-of-the-art program models. Youth-at-risk programs are being tried and evaluated all over the country as never before. Consequently, the program you are developing should be based on what's already been learned about how to make such programs work. In order to bridge the gap between research and practice, increasingly research on program effectiveness is being distilled and disseminated to the public in free or low costs reports such as the Office of Justice Programs report, *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising* (Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie, Eck, Reuter & Bushway, 1997) which can be downloaded from the internet (http://www.ncjrs.org).

In general, we know that successful prevention programs are comprehensive, appropriately timed, intensive, culturally relevant and appropriate, tailored to the needs of participants, involve participants with more prosocial role models, focus on skills development and behavior change, include evaluation linked to program improvement and feedback, have sufficient follow-up/booster sessions and are research-based/theory driven (Nation, Crusto, Kumpfer, Wandersman, Seybolt, Morrisey-Kane & Davino, 1998). One of the most important lessons learned thus far from prevention research is that one-shot, short-term programs do not produce lasting results. As an evaluator I all too frequently encounter such programs but they are generally ineffective. Youth empowerment is a long-term process, not a quick fix.

Using interactive methods, such as peer discussion groups, rather than didactic teaching methods is another way to strengthen youth-at-risk prevention programs (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1997). In addition, programs should include a parents' or caregivers' component that reinforces what their children are learning and that opens the opportunities for family discussions about how to avoid the problem behaviors.

Family-focused prevention has been shown to have a greater impact than programs which focus on parents only or children only (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1997). Finally, its important to coordinate your program with other prevention efforts underway in your community. In Georgia, county level Family Connections which are being established, in part, to facilitate information and coordinated community-based prevention planning are a good place to start planning collaborative efforts and to network for mutual support.

Engendering Community Support

We've also learned that community-based programs must engage broad-based community support and involve grassroots leaders, citizens and key decision makers in program development (Guerra & Williams, 1996). If a youth-at-risk program has not been based on a community needs assessment and does not have broad-based community support, including the backing of grassroots leaders and key decision makers, its chances of being effective are greatly diminished. *It is imperative at the outset to establish a community-based advisory board for your program that includes at least one member from each community sector: business, civic, faith, government, health/medical, juvenile court, law enforcement, media, parents, recreation, school, and youth.* Working with at-risk youth requires the active support of people representing each of these areas.

Developing A Program Logic Model

To make the connection between the program activities and the desired program outcomes in terms of specific risk reduction as clear and explicit as possible, a program logic model should be developed. *Because of their value in helping to elucidate the reasoning on which a program is based and identify gaps therein, program logic models are being increasingly required by program funders.* A logic model is simply a series of succinct, logical statements that link (1) the problems your program is attempting to address, (2) how and why it will address them and what the (3) short-term and (4) long-term expected results are (Kumpfer, Shur, Ross, Bunnell, Librett, & Millward, 1992). *The process of developing the logic model can also be an important one for developing consensus among program stakeholders.* Conversations about what the program is trying to do and why frequently reveal that different stakeholders have divergent views that need to be reconciled before the program is implemented (Weiss, 1995).

Assessing the Program's Feasibility

All too frequently I have evaluated programs that youth and/or their parents did not want to be a part of. Only a few signed up and of those that did, many refused to attend regularly. Or the youth population was highly transient; no one was around for booster sessions. Focus groups and interviews have revealed that issues related to participation were not adequately addressed during program development. The program was held in the wrong place and/or at the wrong time. *One of the hardest lessons*
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (1991). *The Future By Design: A Community*

learned from successful prevention programs is that "high risk, hard-to-reach people will not flock to your program just because you open your doors" (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1991).

Other practical problems I have encountered include lack of money in the budget for snacks, or resource materials. Transportation is generally a big issue for youth programs, but numerous times I have learned that its importance was inadequately addressed during program planning. I find overwhelmed program managers trying to run programs that never had adequate resources and programs that the lack the broad-based community support necessary for youth-at-risk programs to be effective. Another common problem is that other agencies or programs may provide letters of support or pledges of cooperation in a cursory fashion, frequently in response to hurried requests to meet grant application deadlines; but when the time to implement the program arrives, they fail to deliver some or all of what is needed. Frequently I find that program developers were unprepared for the difficulty of recruiting qualified, dependable program staff, generally for low pay and often for part-time work. Or I discover that high staff turnover has made it impossible for the youth to develop trusting relationships with staff. In short, *issues of feasibility must be dealt with as fully as possible during program development.*

Laying A Good Foundation for the Program

Effective program development is not something that can or should be done in a few weeks (or less) to capitalize on an unexpected funding opportunity. Even if you manage to squeak your application past the grant reviewers and obtain funding, as an evaluator I know how unlikely it is that your program will be able to achieve its youth-at-risk empowerment goals. Building a successful program necessitates laying a good solid foundation for the program during the development phase. It requires deep understanding of community needs, knowledge of research-based program models, strong relationships among community members that ensure broad-based community support from multiple community sectors, and the involvement of youth in all phases of program development. Start laying a strong foundation for your program right now. Then, when the funding opportunities come along (and I promise you they will), your carefully crafted program will be ready to soar. ■

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Chapter 4

Empowering Teachers Preparing to Work with At-Risk Youth

Sheila B. Marino and Rosemary Miller

It has been suggested that up to fifty percent of the school population may be considered disabled or "at risk" for school failure. At the same time, the cultural diversity of classrooms is at an all time high. Of the 5.1 million special education students, seventy percent spend all or most all of the day in the general education classroom. If schools are to be successful in meeting the challenge of increased graduation and employment rates, teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of all students who will be members of their classroom.

Special Education Legislation, Civil Rights Legislation, cultural diversity, and raising school district test scores all require that classroom teachers make every effort to instruct all students in all subjects in a manner that will assure educational benefit. A fifth grade class will include students from differing ethnic backgrounds and with a range in achievement levels in reading from second through seventh grade. In addition, several of those students may have identified disabilities that require more specialized instruction. While the special education teacher may provide some of the remediation, the general education teacher is expected to include these students and assure that they participate in the regular curriculum. Faced with this seemingly impossible task, classroom teachers must be empowered to implement effective instructional strategies that will meet the needs of this diverse population.

Empowering teachers to meet the many needs of students at risk for school failure requires careful examination of teachers' feelings of empowerment, skills in collaboration and knowledge of alternative instructional strategies.

Empowerment

A more complex, knowledge-based and diverse population in the classroom creates higher expectations for teachers. Teachers must be empowered to meet these new demands. Teachers must know their subject areas, have positive attitudes toward their profession and students, understand how their students think and process information, have a repertoire of instructional strategies, and have adequate and diverse instructional materials and administrative support. In a study by Peck, Hayden, Wandschneider, Peterson, and Richarz (1989) teacher attitudes played a significant role in the inclusion of at-risk students in regular classroom settings.

In a study by Monahan, Miller, and Marino (1996) of the attitudes of general education teachers toward inclusion, they found that seventy-two percent of the respondents felt that inclusion of students with special needs will not succeed because of too much resistance from regular education teachers. Seventy-five percent of the respondents felt that regular education teachers do not have the instructional skills and educational backgrounds to teach students with special needs and do not feel empowered to work with these students. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that regular education teachers prefer sending students with special needs to special education classrooms rather than having special education teachers deliver services in the regular education teacher's classroom. Fifty-one percent of the respondents felt that regular education teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of students with special needs in their classrooms. Eighty-four percent of the respondents felt that special education and general education teachers should demonstrate collaboration with all students with special needs in the regular classroom. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents stated that they did receive educational support from the special education teacher, however, seventy-one percent of the respondents felt that special education students require more attention and assistance than the general education teacher can provide.

The study pointed out some areas of need for both special education and general education teachers. When general education teachers were asked if they received help with instructional modifications the responses indicated that direct support was limited. While general educators viewed special educators as being supportive, direct assistance with modification tasks may be limited. This may indicate a need for instruction from special education teachers in how to modify curriculum and instructional strategies. The preferences by general educators for sending special education students to the special education teacher while recognizing their responsibility to students with special needs may indicate a lack of confidence in their own knowledge and skills in working with these students. This would indicate a need for more instruction in how to work with students with special needs as well as more information on specific disabilities and working with at-risk youth.

Collaboration

Collaboration has been defined as sharing in the activities necessary to provide appropriate educational programs for students. For the success of special needs students, general education classroom teachers and special education teachers must interact and work together (Smith, Polloway, Patton, and Dowdy, 1995). Using a collaborative model, all teachers and other support personnel work together to plan, implement and evaluate the education programs. Six assumptions form the foundation for collaboration in the schools (Idol and West, 1991). First, educational collaboration is not a new concept. Second, educational collaboration is not an end in itself. It is a method through which students may become successful, well-adjusted citizens. Third, educational collaboration focuses on interaction, which is used as a vehicle for change. Fourth, there may be multiple outcomes of educational collaboration. Fifth, educational collaboration typically has an impact on student outcomes and team members. Sixth, educational collaboration may be used as a team process for planning, decision making, and problem solving.

Linked with collaboration should be consultation. In consultation, special education teachers work with general educational classroom teachers by sharing their expertise in providing special instruction. Collaboration assumes that each teacher brings different but equal expertise to the instructional process. Phillips and McCullough (1990) indicate several basic tenants for collaboration and consultation to effectively be employed by general and special education classroom teachers. These include joint responsibility and accountability for problems, the belief that pooling talents and resources is mutually beneficial, that teacher or student problem resolution merits the expenditure of time, energy, and resources, and that collaboration and consultation can provide increased knowledge and more success for students. As effective collaboration and consultation occur between educational personnel, alternative instructional strategies should emerge that benefit everyone.

Alternative Instructional Strategies

Alternative instructional strategies include modifications in the instructional environment, the instructional materials, and the delivery of instruction.

The instructional environment includes the organization of materials, and classroom instructional groupings. Students with learning problems respond more positively to structure in their environment. Posted class schedules, specific places for completed work and instructional materials and tools for assisting individual students to organize their own materials are effective methods for at risk students. Small group and individual instruction are effective for delivery of information. Cooperative learning groups provide a means for students with poor reading skills to work with more able students as contributing members of a group. Direct instruction, especially in reading, has been demonstrated to be a very effective instructional methodology for poor readers (Carnine, Silbert, and Kameenui, 1997). At risk students need direct instruction in letter names and sounds and how to read for meaning, the key elements of reading that all children require to become good readers (Riley, 1998). Cueing students to stay on task, developing contracts for work completion or appropriate behavior, allowing for short breaks between assignments, giving extra privileges and rewards and keeping classroom rules simple are examples of effective management strategies. Also, praise for appropriate behavior and the implementation of a classroom behavior management plan can improve classroom performance.

Instructional materials can be modified in multiple ways. Highlighting the important ideas and supporting details on copies of the textbook pages, or color coding words of sentences can aid in the comprehension of material, especially when working with content course work such as science or history. Alternative materials may be used as a supplement to the textbook. High interest, low vocabulary materials are helpful for students whose reading levels are significantly below the reading level of the textbook. However, make certain that the important concepts from the textbook are addressed in the less difficult reading material.

The delivery of instruction includes methods used by the teacher and by the students to acquire the information that is presented. Providing students with advance organizers prior to independent reading or group projects has been shown to improve comprehension. Advance organizers help students tap into any prior knowledge they have and begin to relate it to new information (Bos and Vaughn, 1994). Johnston and Pearson (1982) concluded that prior knowledge accounts for more variation in reading performance than IQ or reading achievement level.

Poor readers often begin reading without thinking about the purpose of the reading assignment. Good readers set a purpose for reading and take time to think about the topic in order to tap prior knowledge (Deshler, Ellis, and Lenz, 1996). Study guides prepared by the teacher help students set the purpose for reading. Poor readers also benefit from explicit instruction in text organization. Modeling by the teacher on identifying and using text headings, introductory and summary paragraphs, topic sentences, and signal words to get an overview of the chapter helps students see the benefit of attending to text organization.

Good readers monitor their comprehension as they read an assignment while poor readers read to get the assignment read (Deshler et al., 1996). Pre-teaching critical vocabulary by presenting it in the context of the assignment helps students monitor their comprehension. Dividing the reading into smaller units of material can also be an aid to comprehension and comprehension monitoring on the part of the students.

Individual student approaches to completing a task are called strategies. Strategies are how a person thinks and acts when planning and executing a task (Deshler and Lenz, 1989). Students with learning disabilities and difficulties seem to be strategy deficient (Deshler et al., 1996). These students often relate their school success or failure to luck or to the result of something someone else did or did not do. They have been described as passive or inactive learners. Many student directed learning strategies have been developed by researchers and teachers in the reading and learning disabilities fields. Students with poor reading skills who have been taught to use specific strategies have shown improvement in their comprehension and test performance.

Learning Strategies require direct instruction by the teacher in the components and application. However, once the students have mastered the strategy, they are able to use it independently. For example, students in an eighth grade science class might be instructed in SOS (Search, Operate and Study), a vocabulary strategy (Miller, 1985). The purpose of the strategy is to facilitate the mastery of the content and requires the student to record the textbook vocabulary in a manner that results in an outline of the chapter. The student Searches through the chapter for vocabulary by reading the title, introduction, summary, headings, subheadings, charts and graphs and questions. As vocabulary words are encountered, they are recorded with the page number beside them. The second pass through the material is the Operate step in which the student records the definition of the words and give examples. When these two steps are completed, the student has a chapter outline that focuses on the vocabulary. The final step is to Study the vocabulary words and their meanings using the Study process. This strategy could be a required assignment for every chapter and become part of the assignment for class preparation.

Self-questioning strategies have been developed based on the research that demonstrates that questioning plays an important role in the comprehension process. Factual questions generate literal comprehension while inferential and analytical questions require higher levels of comprehension. "Wh-" questions are often the basis for self questioning strategy instruction.

Test-taking modifications and strategies are also important instructional adaptations that are considered reasonable accommodations. Open book tests, oral exams, take-home exams, recording answers on a tape recorder, and allowing extra time are examples of test modifications. An effective use of these strategies is to pair them with a standard administration of the test. This allows the student to work on test-taking strategies but not be penalized for poor performance.

Summary

Modifications in the instructional environment, the instructional materials, and the delivery of instruction are effective and accepted alternative instructional strategies for improving achievement. Collaboration with special education teachers and other school staff as well as the implementation of teacher and student directed instructional strategies can significantly improve the outcomes for at-risk youth and empower teachers to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms. ■

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Chapter 5

Successful Strategies for Working With Discipline-Resistant Kids

Joyce E. Divinyi

The purpose of this paper is to explore reasons why more and more children are becoming "discipline-resistant" and to challenge the premise that sufficient punishment automatically changes behavior, and the corresponding premise that if punishment does not work the first time, then more severe punishment is what is needed. It will examine a number of the reasons why traditional forms of discipline are not working with many children and will outline some of the forces that currently impact adult/child relationships, alter perceptions of authority, and in turn, limit the power of that authority to change inappropriate behavior. Alternatives to the punishment model will be suggested for working effectively toward positive behavior change with discipline resistant children and adolescents.

It has long been a central belief within educational systems, as well as individual families, that if children are properly punished when their behavior becomes unacceptable or inappropriate, they will respond to the punishment by behaving properly in the future. Many parents and educators grew up with this premise as central to their everyday lives. Another equally important belief is that it is the prerogative and responsibility of adults to make certain that children are punished when they behave badly. Though the manner and extent of the punishment may vary, the idea that punishment changes behavior remains the foundation of behavior management strategies both in families and schools.

This central behavior management principle is being challenged by an increasing number of children and adolescents in homes and schools everywhere. These children appear to be unable or unwilling to respond to disciplinary action while remaining equally unable or unwilling to comply with rules and regulations. Standard disciplinary actions do not change their behavior. They seem to have become *discipline-resistant*.

Forces Impacting Adult/Child Relationships

Discipline resistant children and adolescents often seem committed to self-defeating behavior. Frequently the more punishment these children receive, the worse their behavior becomes. Increasingly inappropriate behavior along with a series of poor choices cause these children to become identified as "at-risk" youth. This identification can set up a fruitless cycle of increasing punishment and increasingly discipline resistant behavior. It is common for adults to react to discipline resistant behavior by increasing the level of punishment even when there has been no evidence that previous punishment have changed the child's behavior. They continue the same punishment over and over to no avail and are often heard saying "nothing works with these kids." Still, adults persist in expecting these children to respond to punishment because that is what worked when they were young. They fail to recognize that the world in which children now live is greatly changed from the times when "because I said so" was the only necessary response to behavior challenges.

Children Today Are Deprived of an Age of Innocence

It is difficult for adults to recognize that children of the late twentieth century are growing up in a very different world than the world in which they or their parents or grandparents grew up. One of the most significant differences is that children of today have been deprived of an age of innocence. Children are deprived of an age of innocence when they are overexposed to adult information, conflicting messages and values, violence and brutality, life altering or life threatening decisions, and trauma and loss (Divinyi, 1997).

An age of innocence is a necessary and healthy time in human development. It is a crucial and sensitive time for the development of the brain and the psyche, much like the budding phase of a fruit bearing plant is the critical phase of the development of the fruit. Plants that are damaged during the budding or blooming phase do not develop healthy fruit. Children in America are not being protected during this phase of their development. Overexposure to adult issues and experiences leaves many child thinking of themselves as adults and thinking of adults as equals, or worse yet, thinking of adults as naive children.

Through media exposure and changing family systems, more children are left unsupervised at earlier ages and for longer periods of time. Often the television serves as supervisor or mentor to children. Without adult supervision, the content of television viewing for children is extremely adult in substance. It is estimated that the average child will watch over 20,000 hours of television before they reach adolescence. They will view 100,000 acts of violence and 8,000 murders. (Waliszewski & Melchisedeck, 1995). Without a supervising adult present, children are not protected from adult viewing—including sexually explicit situations, extreme and prolific violence, and multiple personal value systems that are inappropriate for young children and adolescents.

Perceptions of Authority Are Altered

In addition to the "make believe" world of the media, children are exposed on a daily basis to criminals. Educators everywhere will quickly agree that drug dealing takes place on the campus or in the local neighborhood of practically every school in America. They will also agree that the children know who, where and when drug buying and/or selling is taking place while often the adults do not. This leaves almost every school child in the position of having to decide whether or not to participate in, or report dangerous and illegal activity throughout their entire school career.

When children are exposed at an early age to adult information and are forced to make adult decisions, like whether or not to buy or sell drugs, or whether or not to report the illegal activity to the adults in charge, they develop a radically different sense of adult child relationships than their parents of grandparent may have had. This relationship must incorporate the reality that many children know about the dark under belly of the culture while the adults in charge are ignorant. The children have become the knowing ones and the adults the innocents.

Since the primary responsibility of adults is to protect children, it is to be expected that when children know about dangerous things that the adults in charge do not, they will not feel safe, nor will they consider the adults to be their superiors.

While children may not be consciously aware of this changing perception of adult authority, they often react to adults as though they are peers rather than superiors. They are not affected by the disapproval of adults as children once were. Instead, they sometimes seem antagonistic to any adults who are in positions of authority over them.

The Impact of Trauma on Child Behavior

Another significant factor which can impact the behavior of children, their perceptions of authority, and relationship to adults, is exposure to trauma. Trauma is defined as an extraordinary event which engenders feelings of extreme fear and powerlessness. The experience of trauma and its powerful affects on children is not limited to physical or sexual abuse or other less common but devastating events. It can include events such as divorce, that are common in the culture, but remain extraordinary in their impact on the circumstances and emotions of the child. To survive traumatic experiences, children develop coping mechanisms which can have lasting effects on their behavior, thinking processes and emotional development. Understanding these effects can help adults deal with discipline resistant behavior.

Disassociation

The normal interaction between feeling and thinking is significantly disrupted when trauma occurs. This allows the individual to suppress potentially immobilizing feelings of terror in order to do whatever is necessary to survive. Feelings and thinking get disconnected and an "automatic pilot" condition develops. This process can be extremely useful during a traumatic event.

Under normal circumstances the interaction between emotion and cognition is critical to the decision making process. When this critical connection is broken or becomes weakened or fragile due to the effects of trauma, children can temporarily lose the ability to allow their thinking process to intercede when an emotional impulse occurs. Emotions then drive their actions. The result is often negative behavior which they themselves do not understand. When asked, "what were you thinking of?", their reply is, "I don't know" (Divinyi, 1997). This statement often inflames adults who do not recognize that the critical connection between feeling and thinking has been broken.

The emotionally intense reaction of adults can exacerbate the disconnection making it difficult or even impossible to reason with the child or get them to acknowledge their inappropriate behavior.

Inappropriate Reaction

This same process can cause trauma victims to have strong reactions to minor irritation or stimuli. Occasionally a here and now event will trigger an emotional memory of a past trauma, and the subsequent reaction can be highly intense and appear to be completely inappropriate for the situation. The memory of long term pervasive trauma is stored differently in the brain than memories of single event trauma (Terr, 1991) and is not always accessible for recall. Emotional reactions can occur without a corresponding memory of the trauma. It is often disconcerting to adults when this occurs because it seems that the child is seriously overreacting to an insignificant comment or action. The problem is that neither child or adult fully understands what has happened.

Developmental Arrest

Another consequence of trauma is that it can cause developmental arrest, delay or regression. Sometimes emotional and psychological development will stop at the point of the trauma such that children who experience profound abuse in early childhood will mature physically and intellectually but remain a small child or toddler emotionally and psychologically. Three areas seems to be significantly effected in the developmental process: (a) The ability to problem solve; (b) the ability to handle frustration; and (c) the ability to interact appropriately with their peers (Divinyi, 1997).

The typical public school setting groups children chronologically, therefore, traumatized children can seem immature, out of sync with their peer group, or even emotionally unstable. Since the history of the childhood trauma is not necessarily known to teachers, these children often elicit feelings of anger, frustration or helplessness on the part of their teachers or caretakers. They often are treated strictly as behavior problems or candidates for special education.

No Concept of Future

Of all the unfortunate consequences of trauma in the lives of children, the impairment of their ability to conceptualize the future is the most debilitating. This phenomenon is not a matter of children being unconcerned about what they want to be when they grow up but more a deep distrust of the future (Terr, 1991). These children live one day at a time, sometimes one moment at a time. They have no concept of the connection between here and now events or actions and future consequences.

Futureless thinking becomes problematic in the school setting where most daily activities are predicated on future events. Today's preparations are for tomorrow's tests. Futureless thinking impairs the ability to invest effort and commitment in activities that seem irrelevant to the moment. It also gives children the appearance of "not caring" about anything when, in fact, they are simply not psychologically or emotionally connected to their future and profoundly distrust what future they can imagine.

This same phenomenon makes punishment an ineffective behavior management tool. Punishment for bad behavior always resides in the future. For punishment to be effective, children must be able to think about how their inappropriate behavior will lead to a "future" suffering. When past events have created a profound sense of futurelessness, or current suffering is such that any anticipated punishment seems meaningless, then the power of punishment to alter behavior is seriously compromised and the child appears to have become "discipline resistant."

Principles and Guidelines for Discipline Resistant Children

Choose a Response—Prevent a Reaction

Discipline resistant children have the ability to generate highly intense emotional reactions in the adults who try to manage their behavior. The emotional reaction of adults gives these children the opportunity to divert attention from their unacceptable behavior to the emotional conflict generated by the adult's reaction. In order to change inappropriate behavior, it is necessary to keep the focus of attention on the behavior and not on the conflict between the child and adult. To do this adult's must be *prepared* to respond rather than react to unacceptable behavior. The difference between a reaction and a response is a plan.

It is essential for adults to plan their response to difficult behavior by becoming aware of what triggers their own reactions. Time spent in identifying the behaviors that most irritate or inflame adults and predetermining a chosen response to such behavior is an investment in successful behavior management strategies.

Speak Firmly

The voice is a powerful behavior management tool (Divinyi, 1997). Most often it is misused. When speaking with a difficult child, it is most effective to speak in a low, slow, firm and respectful tone of voice. Too often adults raise their voices and speak rapidly giving the impression that they have lost control.

You Cannot Force a Child to Behave

Discipline resistant children will *not* respond to force. It is imperative to avoid attempts to force them into compliance. Many of these children are trauma victims or have a personality style that automatically resists force. They will intensify their resistance when they are threatened.

Distinguish Between the Person and the Behavior

Be careful to focus on the unacceptable behavior and not the person when confronting a discipline resistant child. These children are used to being disliked, and labeled "bad." If the focus stays on the behavior it lessens the chance of conflicts becoming personality clashes and power struggles. Also, these children need to know that they are likable and acceptable even if their behavior is not.

Tell Them What You Want Them to Do, Not Just What You Do Not Want Them to Do

Avoid only telling the child what you do not want them to do. Clear, concise, specific, detailed instruction directing the child to the appropriate behavior is necessary to maximize the chances of compliant behavior. Clearly describe and teach appropriate behavior. Many discipline resistant children have poor coping, stress management, and conflict resolution skills. Offering the choice between compliance and consequences may be necessary, but is not advisable before a respectful but firm request to do the right thing is made. All consequences should be oriented to teaching rather than punishment.

If the Behavior is Unacceptable in the Workplace, Make it Unacceptable in the Classroom

Making rules and standards for proper behavior relevant to children is necessary in the face of significantly altered perceptions of authority. The "because I said so" rule no longer applies. Also, many children live with radically different standards for proper behavior. It is, therefore, best to explain the reason proper behavior is necessary and required.

Always make it clear that behavior standards and expectations are meant to serve the child's best interest not just the adult's or the organization. The best standard for proper behavior is the standard of behavior required by most employers. Make it clear that any behavior including rudeness, nasty and threatening language, refusal to work, refusal to comply with the rules of the organization or any form of violence or harassment will get a person fired. It is not in anyone's best interest to allow children to do things that will one day get them fired.

Be Respectful, Even If They Are Not

Give discipline resistant kids the freedom to feel whatever they feel about having to comply. They do not have to like doing what is required. They just have to do it. Make certain that your behavior is respectful and sets the example for proper behavior. Many of these children have not witnessed healthy disagreement or conflict resolution.

Identify and Affirm Their Strengths

Often these children are seen only from the stand point of their unacceptable behavior. In order to develop the positive relationship necessary to get these children to do what you want them to do, it is vital to be able to recognize the child's strengths. Personal strengths are often obvious in the flip side of unacceptable behavior. A child that is oppositional and defiant frequently has the leadership qualities of boldness and individual thinking. Looking for the strengths behind the negative behavior is a valuable relationship building tool.

Clearly Define the Limits, Boundaries and Consequences

Effective consequences require time and effort to meaningfully determine. When systems define consequences, they are frequently not effective, as in the case of using in-school and out-of-school suspension as the most common punishments for unacceptable behavior. Many discipline resistant students prefer to be in the tightly structured, safe and less demanding setting, of an in-school suspension room. Many would prefer not to be in school at all and manage to get themselves in trouble frequently or seriously enough to get sent home. The so called punishments thereby reward the negative behavior. Time and attention must be spent setting up meaningful consequences that are designed to teach self-control skills or require children to give up something of importance to them because ineffective consequences reinforce negative behavior.

Incentives for Appropriate Behavior Help Children Think of Future Consequences

Consequences for behavior can be both positive and negative. Incentives for positive behavior help discipline resistant children focus on the future, stay on task, and strive to change their behavior in order to get something they want. It is easier to imagine and anticipate getting something one wants than to imagine meaningless punishment.

Walk Them Through the Thinking Process

It is not enough to define the proper behavior required or the incentives and consequences for improper behavior. Discipline resistant children need help with the choice making process. They need to be walked through the thinking process (Divinyi, 1997). To walk a child through the thinking process, first acknowledge their feelings of anger, frustration, discouragement or whatever they may be feeling about the situation or you. Acknowledgment is not agreement. It is simply the recognition that most inappropriate behavior is generated by feelings or needs and the acknowledgment of those feelings helps children make the feeling/thinking connection. A simple, "It seems like you are frustrated or angry or hurt" will do.

Then affirm their strengths (be specific about the particular child's positive characteristics) and their ability to make a good decision. "You're very creative and have a hard time staying with the job, but I think you can do what you need to do." *Describe* in detail, using feeling language, what they will experience as a consequence of their choice. Be careful to describe *rather than predict* what will happen. To say , "I don't think you will feel too happy when you are working on this assignment while the rest of the group is watching a movie," is different from saying, "If you don't settle down, you won't get to watch the movie." Walking them through the thinking process helps them think more clearly about the future. However, predictions of future negative consequences are usually an invitation to make the wrong choice.

Conclusion

When *behavior change* rather than punishment is the main educational focus, it opens the door for adults to teach discipline resistant children the coping strategies, which they need to deal with stresses and traumas. These children desperately need problem solving, goal setting, decision making, and anger management skills. Walking children through the thinking process is a practical way to teach these skills. When adults articulate effective thinking for children, they give children an opportunity to hear this process in action rather than recognize a bad decision after the fact. Interventions that do not teach skills will not be effective in creating long-term behavior change.

Focusing on behavior change opens up new possibilities for communication with at-risk children. It makes it possible to build positive and supportive relationships rather than set up power struggles. Consider how the following questions focus on behavior change: "How can I get this child to behave differently?" "What do I want this child to do instead of what he or she is doing?" "What will help the child focus on the new behavior?" These behavior change questions create more positive options for teacher/child interaction than the following questions concerning punishment: "How can I punish this child enough to make him or her stop misbehaving?" and "How can I use punishment to control the child?" In the former instance, the questions about behavior change are the beginning of a behavior change plan and the seeds of opportunity to teach new skills. In the later instance, the questions about punishment usually leave a sense of frustration and failure. They undermine attempts to role model and teach healthy and appropriate behaviors in the face of stressful circumstances. It may be unfair and certainly challenging for public school teachers to have to teach social coping and management skills. However, those who are unwilling or unable to do this, will have a difficult, if not impossible time teaching discipline resistant children.

Children who have been deprived of an age of innocence, need positive adult role models. Growing numbers of children are living in trauma and come into the classroom with overwhelming needs and issues. Their arrested emotional development, their tendency to "disconnect" when stressed or emotionally aroused, as well as their inability to conceptualized the future make it far more complex than most school discipline systems can address. To be successful with these children, adults must recognize that their relationship with children must be built on *mutual* respect and trust. They must be willing and able—not only to set an example of appropriate behavior in the face of conflict and frustration—but to teach these behaviors as well. The rewards are success for both children and adults. ■

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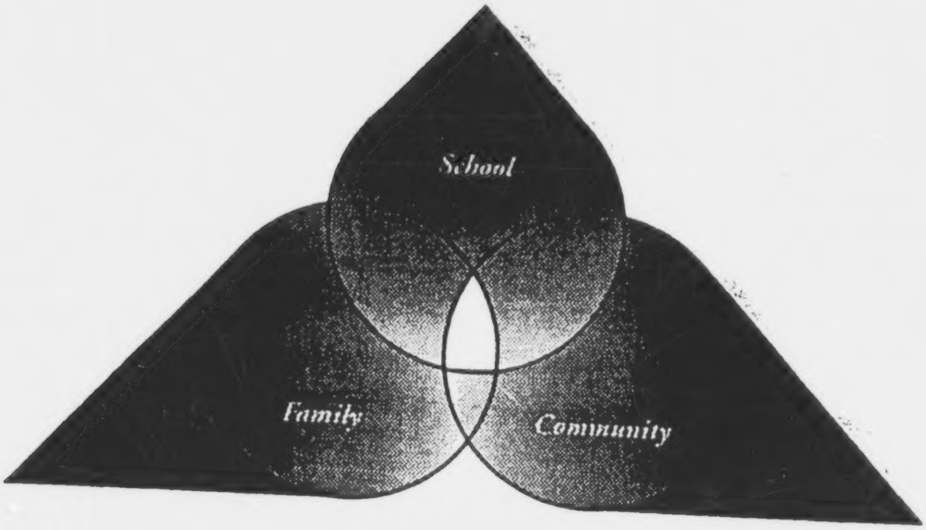
II. EMPOWERING PARENTS AND EDUCATORS AGAINST VIOLENCE, GANGS, AND DRUGS


School
Family
Community

Chapter 6

Project SAVE:
Standing Against Violence in Education

Elsie P. Daniels

Project SAVE is a proposal to unite parents, the community, and schools in making schools safe. The goal is to curb the increasing number of violent acts by merging parent, community, and school resources to address the problem. The target population is the students who engage in physical acts of violence in school settings. A current issue under consideration by several states/commonwealths is whether parents can be held responsible for their children's behavior. If parents can be held responsible, will school systems be able to require parents to attend intervention programs? Current issues of law, intervention, prevention, risk, and protective factors that affect youths are discussed. The premise is that parents must become the chief proponents of antiviolence in our schools. Parents teaching nonviolence in school will help educate children against violence. Specific proposal goals are to: (a) use all parent, community and school resources in a concerted effort to address the problem of violent behavior in our schools, (b) engage parents as major figures in addressing the problem, and (c) involve the community and community resources in addressing the problem.

School Violence as a Reflection of Societal Violence

Efforts aimed at preventing violence can be compared to efforts aimed at preventing smoking. Information must permeate all levels of society. For example, smoking is not allowed on buses, trains, an airplanes or in restaurants. If people ask you to please stop smoking, most people will do that now that we understand its risk. In the same manner, kids have to hear about violence prevention in school, parents have to hear it from their primary care providers, adolescents have to hear it from their teachers, and workplaces have to encourage conflict resolution. It has to permeate the society (Lockwood, 1993).

Violence permeates our society. In 1992, more than 111,000 violent incidents occurred in work environments and about one- fourth of the population feared for their lives in their own homes (Ceperley & Simon, 1994). According to Prothrow-Stith (as cited in Lockwood, 1993), violence is a public health problem. When treated as health education, the campaign against violence should parallel the public health campaign against smoking. In this framework, working to change behaviors that surround violence is an appropriate mission for all members of society. Addressing the problem of violent behavior in students has implications for reducing violence in society. All citizens benefit from safe schools.

State and Local Initiatives to Involve Parents

It is estimated that approximately 14,000 young people are attacked on school property every day and 160,000 children miss school daily because of fear of violence (Washington Education Association, 1994). During the 1995-96 school year alone, the Commonwealth of Virginia reported 31,036 fights among students and 658 incidents of striking school personnel (Virginia Department of Education, 1997). While this may be a relatively small percent of the student population, fighting can be fatal. One recommendation of the American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth, following a two-year study, was that school-based interventions be designed to help schools provide a safe environment and effective programs be developed to prevent violence (Ceperley & Simon, 1994).

The problem is so serious that government entities throughout the nation are convening to address the enigma. For example, in January, 1997, the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia established a Commission on School Discipline to study the problem of discipline in the schools. The General Assembly (Article 16.1-309.2) dealing with juveniles, emphasizes parental responsibility and community- based services for juveniles and their families. The wording in the article seems to hold students accountable for their behavior and parents responsible for their children's behavior. Under parental responsibility and involvement requirements, each parent of a student enrolled in a public school has a duty to assist the school in enforcing the standards of student conduct and attendance in order that education may be conducted in an atmosphere free of disruption and threat to persons or property, and supportive of individual rights (subsection A). The school principal may request the student's parent to meet with the principal or the principal's designee to review the school board's standards of student conduct and the parent's responsibility to participate with the school in disciplining the student and maintaining order, and to discuss improvement of the child's behavior and educational progress (subsection D). Upon the failure of a parent to comply with the provisions of this section, the school board may, by petition to the juvenile and domestic relations court, proceed against such parent for willful and unreasonable refusal to participate in efforts to improve the student's behavior (subsection G). If the court finds that the parent has willfully and unreasonably failed to accompany a suspended student to meet with school officials pursuant to subsection F, or upon the student's receiving a second suspension or being expelled, it may order (i) the student or parent to participate in such programs or such treatment as the court deems appropriate to improve the student's behavior or (ii) the student or parent to be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court deems appropriate for the supervision, care, and rehabilitation of the student or parent. In addition, the court may order the parent to pay a civil penalty not to exceed $500. A current issue under consideration is the extent to which parents can be held responsible for their children's behavior prior to court intervention.

The Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended §22.1-279.3, states that principals may request the student's parent to meet with the principal or designee to review the School

Board's standards of student conduct and the parent's responsibility to participate with the school in disciplining the student and maintaining order. Literal interpretation of Article 16.1-309.2 specifies consequences for the parent/guardian only if the parent does not attend a reentry conference for the student.

Many states/commonwealths and local boards have and are initiating specific measures to empower local school leaders to address the problem of violence in the schools. Many of these measures, such as stricter rules and regulations, alternative schools, security personnel and personnel education, are designed to create an infrastructure that reacts properly to the inappropriate behaviors of a few young students (Thayer, 1996). Some systems teach the students conflict resolution strategies as violence prevention measures. While most violence prevention and intervention efforts are directed at the schools, students, and community, parent-directed initiatives are limited.

Several states have laws creating parental financial responsibility for offenses committed by their children. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, the courts can request the parent/guardian of any child who has been disciplined for a weapon-related offense, alcohol or other drug violations, or an assault, to participate in an appropriate parenting support, counseling, or educational session aimed at rehabilitating these specific student behaviors. Washington Education Association's resource manual (1994) reiterates truancy penalties such as fining parents for parent or student attacks against school personnel. Parents can be held liable for a child's willful destruction of property or willful infliction of personal injury up to $5,000. California has laws making parents liable for having reasonable care, supervision, protection and control over their minor child (Menacker, 1994). Illinois upgraded school- related assault and battery incidents to aggravated assault and battery (Menacker, 1994).

Aiken County Public Schools in Aiken, South Carolina take the position that violence, especially fighting is a level three offense that can be handled by law enforcement officials and the courts (Aiken County Student Handbook, 1997-98). Students involved in fights are taken by parents or the police to jail and fined. For the first fighting offense in school, the student is fined. Subsequent offenses are subject to the discretion of the courts. Fines, community service, and/or incarceration are options.

A recent survey indicated that seventy-one percent of teachers perceived that the major factor contributing to student violence is lack of parental supervision at home. Sixty-six percent felt that lack of family involvement with the school and exposure to violence (55%) in the mass media was the cause of school violence (Hoffman, 1996). School-based interventions cannot accomplish effective violence prevention without the support and assistance of parents (Lawrence, 1998). "While school leaders want parents to assume more responsibility for their children's behaviors, and many recognize that assistance with parenting is necessary, school leaders have not forwarded a plan or a process for helping communities address issues that are causing conflicts at school" (Thayer, 1996, p, 289). There should be concentrated effort directed at strengthening and educating the parents in their role as the children's first and primary teachers in providing guidance, discipline and sound values.

Project SAVE

If we educate or reeducate parents, parents will help educate children against violence. This idea was conceived following a public appeal made by the parent of a student who died during a violent altercation in school. Students report regularly that their parents tell them to 'hit back' if anyone hits them or 'fight' if they are called certain names. Parents must become educated about the societal changes that make certain retaliatory responses dangerous. Parents and caretakers must become the chief proponents of nonviolence in school and embrace more appropriate conflict resolution strategies. This overall goal is based on the belief that parents want what is best for their children and will appreciate assistance and support in guiding the behavior of their children.

There is a need for interdisciplinary, broad-based, and community-driven responses to violence; collaborative efforts among schools, community agencies, policy makers, and other stakeholders must be initiated (Hoffman, 1996). Project SAVE is a violence intervention strategy to unite parents, the community, and schools in making schools safe. The project is designed to curb the increasing number of violent acts by merging parent, community, and school resources to address the problem. There is a focus on the population of students who engage in physical acts of violence in school settings. It is an educational approach to reducing violence.

A survey of school administrators and teachers indicates that suspension is the most frequently used punishment for fighting. However, most of the school personnel felt that suspensions were not effective in bringing about changes in student behavior. Schools focus more on punishment than on addressing the situation that created the problems; largest number of suspensions in response to fighting among students or insubordination (Henderson & Friedland, 1996).

The program emphasizes self-control, emotional awareness, and appropriate school based conflict resolution strategies. Specific proposal goals are to (a) use all parent, community and school resources in a concerted effort to address the problem of violent behavior in our schools, (b) engage parents as major figures in addressing the problem, and (c) involve the community and community resources in addressing the problem. Specific objectives of the proposed program are to (a) insure that parents and educators are united in their approach to the problem. It is imperative that parents and educators convey the same antiviolence message to the students. Parents and students have to know that the admonishment, "If someone hits you, you hit them back" can be deadly, (b) educate parents of the problems encountered in schools and equip parents with alternative solutions and resources for helping their children relate appropriately in the educational environment and society, (c) provide the opportunity for parents and educators to profit from the knowledge and experiences of other parents whose children have suffered from acts of violence, (d) make community services and resources easily and quickly accessible to parents in order to help them address problems they may have with their children, and (e) provide a clearinghouse of information, services, and assistance for the parents, community, students, and educators.

Implementation

"Children who are most at risk for violence tend to be urban, tend to be poor, tend to be young men, and they tend to be children who have witnessed a lot of violence and have been victims of violence in their early childhood development" (Lockwood, 1993, p. 3). According to a report from the United States Department of Health and Human Resources, violence prevention efforts should be introduced at an early age, especially in inner cities where children are exposed to violence from a very early age. Reactions to violence are often embedded by middle school. Therefore, programs that target older children must dismantle unhealthy behavior and defuse immediate crises before they can focus on preventive measures (United States Department of Health and Human Resources, n.d.).

With Project SAVE, a school district that suspends students for fighting, Project SAVE, suspended students, as well as their parents, will attend antiviolence and conflict resolution classes before the student returns to school. Invoking strict school regulations, students involved in a school fight in some districts are suspended for ten days for the first and second incident. They are expelled if they are involved in a third altercation. It is proposed that during the ten day suspension period, the parents and students attend a four hour session on violence reduction before the student returns to school. If the student is involved in a second violent altercation, the parent and student will attend a six hour violence reduction session. The sessions are to be planned and conducted by parents, community agencies and partners, and educators.

An Overview of the Modules

Session modules will include, but not be limited to, the ten one hour modules to be described. While the estimated time for each module is one hour, more time may be needed to adequately cover the content suggested for the modules. Separate and concurrent sessions are proposed. Separate sessions for parents and students are intended to allow parents and students to address issues they may be more comfortable discussing with their peers. Incentives such as reduced suspension time for completing classes may improve participation.

While is it hoped that volunteers participate, funding should be a consideration for operating the program. Alternatives to sufficient funding may be personnel who are provided compensation time, community agencies and organizations that provide these services as a part of their program, and volunteers. Schedulers for the sessions should consider the working hours of the parents and people who conduct the sessions. Parent, as used throughout this paper, refers to any caretaker for a child or children. "Parents, as well as young people, struggle with such influences such as free-floating anger, the glamorization of violence, and the increase in bigotry in our society. Just as young people and teachers need to be explicitly taught skills in emotional literacy, conflict resolution, and bias awareness, so do parents" (Lantieri & Patti, 1996, p.180). Time should be provided for parents and students to discuss information and ask questions. Every session should focus on school and parents conveying the same antiviolence and conflict resolution messages to the students.

Module 1 (Parents and Students)

Objective 1: To review school policy regarding violence; to acquaint parents with existing school strategies for handling conflict among students. Objective 2: To orientate the parents and students to the purpose of Project SAVE; to inform parents of situations the student is confronted with in a school setting and how the situation is best handled to prevent physical confrontation. Strategy: Demonstrate differences between conflict resolution strategies in school settings and street settings (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Module 2 (Parents and Students)

Objective 1: To teach what violence is, how it is perpetrated, and what the consequences are to families, friends, schools, and communities. Objective 2: To explain violence as a learned behavior that is preventable (Lockwood, 1993). Strategy: Present evidence of how society presents violence as funny, entertaining, successful, and the superhero's first choice (Lockwood, 1993).

Module 3a (Parents Only)

Objective 1: To teach options to violence at school. Objective 2: To teach parents how to teach students to stand up for themselves without getting into a fight and how to support children who choose nonviolence. Strategy: Model for parents statements that provide support for anti-violent positions especially from peers and family (students taunted for not fighting); you don't have to fight, you have other choices.

Module 3b (Students Only)

Objective 1: To teach options to violence at school. Objective 2: To teach students how to stand up for themselves without getting into a fight. Strategy: Role play typical fight situations that revolve around relationships, he-said, she-said, looking at somebody and assuming it meant something bad, bumping into somebody and assuming it was on purpose, teasing and taunting. Identify the instigators, the role of onlookers; provide support for students who don't want to fight (Lockwood, 1993).

Module 4 (Parents and Students)

Objective 1: To teach students and parents skills in emotional literacy, conflict resolution, and bias awareness (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). Objective 2: To teach young people skills in emotional literacy, conflict resolution, and bias awareness (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). Strategy: Model the language of choices; the student can choose not to have a weapon, choose not to use drugs, learn how to solve problems without getting into arguments, and choose to hang out with kids who are not likely to get into trouble.

Module 5 (Parents and Students) Modules five through ten are for second time offenders.

Objective 1: To orientate parents and students to the purpose of the second Project SAVE session. Objective 2: To develop a nonviolent conflict resolution plan and contract.

Strategy: Group counsel regarding specific fighting incidents.

Module 6 (Parents and Students)

Objective 1: To teach anger coping strategies; anger management; Teach participants to negotiate needs without either being too quiet or too abrasive, but in a way that will get what they want. Strategy: Anger coping designed to reduce conflict and violence; focus on the establishment of group rules, use of self-statements to reduce aggression, development of understanding others' points of view, and identifying solutions and consequences for social situations; Paths Curricula developed at the University of Washington uses traffic light format of stop (What is happening?), get ready (What could I do?), go (Try my best plan, evaluate - How did I do?; Washington Education Association, 1994).

Module 7 (Parents and Students)

Objective: To inform parents and students of the realities and possible legal consequences of violent acts. Strategy: To present community members, police department and community agencies information and materials on violent behavior; students are shown homicide statistics and asked to share their points of view on fighting and violence in society. Role play and identify crucial points where a conflict can either lead to violence or be settled peacefully (Lockwood, 1993).

Modules 8 and 9 (Parents and Students)

Objective: To present the realities of the consequences of violent behavior. Strategy: Seminar presented by parents, family members and friends of students hurt by violence in schools.

Module 10 (Parents and Students)

Objective 1: To summarize information presented and provide all participants with conflict resolution strategies and resources available for additional assistance. Objective 2: To identify students who need additional assistance with conflict and anger management and identify community resources for follow up referrals. Strategy: Conflict resolution strategists, school personnel, and community agencies work with students for follow up assistance; crisis hotline.

Summary

It should be emphasized that school is only one piece of the solution to reducing school violence. This intervention program infuses parents directly into the process the first time a problem is evidenced in the school setting. "School violence is a societal problem, not just a school problem. . .literally everyone in every community must work together to protect our schools and children" (Washington Education Association, 1994). Schools belong to the people. Therefore, decisions related to violence prevention should include faculty, parents, and students. These individuals need an opportunity to assume ownership in identifying problems and finding solutions to antisocial behavior (Bey & Turner, 1996). This approach is a start in directly involving parents in stopping fights in school settings. ■

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Chapter 7

The Rise of Gangs in America

Carl Spiva

On any given night along with the local news, sports, and weather reports in large and small cities throughout the United States, we hear of incidences of gang violence which have increased in the past few years to a paradigm of violence that has become increasingly lethal. Today's street gangs differ from the gangs in the past due to three main factors. The first is firepower. They have access to some of the most sophisticated and lethal weapons ever available (automatic weapons, military surplus, and training). The second is the plethora of cheaper and more addictive drugs (Cat, G.H.B., Rohypnol). Last, today's gangs are no longer tied to their "neighborhood." They are much more mobile and participate in degenerate and assorted crimes which include violent activities such as drug sales, murder, auto theft, drive-by shootings, home invasions, robberies and burglaries.

In the past, the terms traditional gangs, established gangs, or youth gangs typified the gangs that had been operating in neighborhoods. Newer terms, such as clique and set, are now often used to identify a gang or an off-shoot of a gang.

Nationally, youth gangs and their activities have been a periodic and apparent indication of intense disorder in society which parallels the structural changes in society. For example, gangs have become more violent as a result of increased violence in society. Characterizing present day gangs is not a simple task because they are more diverse and complex than gangs of earlier times. In addition, today's gangs are distinguishable from gangs of the past in the following ways (Gang, 1997):

- an insurgence of female gangs
- younger members (some as young as six years old)
- evidence of racial crossover within gangs
- total disregard for human life
- established cliques or sets in rural communities
- use of drugs and alcohol
- violent membership
- use of sophisticated communication devices and automatic weapons
- use of guerrilla warfare tactics
- large sums of money from illegal drug sales

As a 24-year veteran law enforcement officer who has traveled to 30 states, met and trained thousands of police officers, I am still amazed by the amount of denial associated with gang activity across this country. I hear officers say, "They have gangs in Chicago and Los Angeles, but not in my town." "We have only Wannabes—not real gang members" is also another common response.

The average police department in the United States is 10 people or less. When I speak to these officers, they admit that Al Capone was a real gang member (he even invented the "drive by shooting"). However, his organization killed only 350 people during its existence while gangs today kill twice that many in one day across this country.

One gang, known as the Latin Kings, says that their goal is to have 100,000 members by the year 2000. They have been known to hunt law enforcement officers with a cross bow, because it penetrates both sides of a protective vest. Neither the law enforcement, nor the public can deny this threat to society. We must combine our efforts and resources to protect ourselves and to help reclaim our youth from gang involvement.

One of the best ways to overcome the denial of gangs that characterizes some law enforcement departments and the general public is to make sure that everyone is well informed about gangs. In my travels across America, I have collected the most frequently asked questions about gangs. In the following section, I have listed these questions with current answers based on my research and experience as a police officer who has devoted his career to the study of gangs in Georgia and throughout America.

Frequently Asked Questions about Gangs

What is a Gang?

Street gang membership encompasses *all races* from most socioeconomic levels and are not limited to larger cities. Active prevention is now required virtually from the start of a child's entry into the school system. Street gangs have national scope, many are localized imitation of larger city gangs.

A street gang is a group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol or name, and who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in, criminal activity, or as a juvenile commits an act that if committed by an adult would be a criminal act (Petrone, 1997).

What is a Street Gang Member?

An individual shall be considered a "street gang member" when that person meets any one of the following criteria:

1. When the individual admits membership in a gang.
2. When a law enforcement agency or reliable informant identifies an individual as a gang member.
3. When an informant of previously untested reliability identifies an individual as a gang member, and it is corroborated by independent information.
4. When the individual resides in or frequents a particular gang's area and affects their style of dress, use of hand signs, symbols or tattoos, and/or maintains ongoing relationships with known gang members; or has been arrested several

> times in the company of identified gang members for offenses which are consistent with usual gang activity; and where the law enforcement officer believes there is reasonable suspicion that the individual is involved in gang-related criminal activity or enterprise (Petrone, 1997).

What is a Street Gang Affiliate?

An individual who does not meet the criteria for a "street gang member," but is known to affiliate with active gang members, and law enforcement personnel have established a reasonable suspicion that the individual is involved in criminal activity or enterprise, or promotes the criminal activity of a gang.

What is Gang Activity?

Activities that gangs are involved in include fighting, vandalism, graffiti, armed robbery, weapon offenses, auto theft, battery, and drug dealing. Not all gang members are engaged in illegal activities. Criminal activity is usually committed by gang members for monetary benefit to either the gang itself or to an individual member.

What is a Gang Structure?

Peer pressure plays an important role in a decision to join a gang. Gang members come from all walks of life, from low income to high income. Some gang members have relatives who belong to a gang. Gang members are placed in the following categories:

1. "Leaders" are usually the oldest members with extensive criminal backgrounds. They direct activities and recruitment of gang members. Each gang has a particular command structure. Most of the high ranking officers in the gangs come from source cities, such as Chicago.
2. "Hard-core members" are usually the most violent members of the gang with criminal backgrounds. They generally commit the more serious crimes and are behind the drug dealing trade for the gang. They intimidate the younger members of the gang and show them what is required to display loyalty to the gang.
3. "Fringe and/or marginal members" are usually the youngest and the newest members of the gang with little criminal backgrounds. They may have joined the gang or are thinking about joining the gang. They may only be involved temporarily or on a limited basis, or they may progress into hard-core members.

What are Common Identifiers?

Gang members use graffiti, hand signs, jewelry, tattoos, clothing and colors to signify their membership in a gang and to communicate their gang affiliation to others. Each gang has its own unique graffiti, signs and colors (Kyle, 1994).

Hand signs are used to communicate within the gang and to challenge a rival gangs. The signs are made by forming letters and/or numbers with fingers.

Tattoos are used to mark ones body as an identifier indicating membership in a particular gang. The tattoos can include the name, initials, street of origin, initials, or symbols of a gang. Some tattoos are professionally drawn while others are homemade. Tattoos can be found on any part of the body, but are commonly found on the hands, arms, chest, back, thighs or ankles.

Colors. Most gangs have particular colors that they use to identify themselves. Many of the gang members will frequently dress in these colors.

Clothing. Some gangs use particular sports team clothing to represent their gang by picking a team that uses the particular colors associated with gangs. They may also pick out a teams clothing because of the symbol represented by that team, such as the five point star used by the Dallas Cowboys.

Jewelry. Gangs are usually divided into two groups, the folks and the peoples. Jewelry with a six point star indicate a membership with a gang related to the folks, while a five point star is associated with the peoples.

Street names. Members of gangs use their "street names" with each other. They are used to conceal identification from law enforcement. Sometimes gang members use addressers such as "folks" and "people" when talking to each other.

NOTE: The wearing of particular items of clothing should not be used alone as an indication of gang involvement.

What are Signs of Possible Gang Involvement?

Consider the following signs of gang involvement (Kyle, 1994):

- Baseball caps worn distinctively to the left or the right.
- Tattoos of stars, pitchforks, or unexplained symbols.
- Jewelry, including rings, earrings, and necklaces with nicknames, stars, pitchforks or unexplained initials or symbols.
- Money from an unexplained source.
- Certain clothes with particular colors and sport team identification which are the only type a child will wear.
- New friends that parents are not acquainted with and whom they are not allowed to meet.
- Unexplained signs and symbols on books, folders, clothes, bedroom walls and personal belongings.
- Truancy or poor progress in school.
- Frequent negative contacts with police.

What is Graffiti?

Gang members mark their territory with graffiti, such as pitch forks, initials and symbols. The markings can range from simple to elaborate. Typically graffiti is used to warn competing gangs that there is a threat of takeover. It is essential to remove graffiti as soon as possible, so that it will not be defaced by a rival gang. "Dissing" is done by insulting rival gangs. This occurs when original gang graffiti is crossed out and an opposing gang graffiti written over or next to it, or by graffiti representing the original gang written upside down by the rival gang.

Again it is important to remove the graffiti as soon as possible. Business and property owners should be made aware of graffiti and encouraged to remove it as soon as possible. Graffiti should be reported to your local police or sheriff's precinct as soon as possible.

What Can You Do If You Suspect Your Child Is Involved In A Gang?

Do not think that a gang is just a phase. Older gang members use newer gang member or people looking to get into the gang by having them take most of the risk. Large quantities of "crack" cocaine have been found on newer members, while older members refuse to associate with them when they get caught. Consider the following actions if you suspect your child is involved in a gang:

- Do not ignore your suspicions, talk to your child.
- Watch for some of the signs mentioned previously.
- Listen to conversations your child has with friends or new acquaintance.
- Check your child's room periodically for signs and symbols.
- Talk to your child's teachers about your suspicions.
- Divert your child's attention away from friends unknown to you and into other activities.
- Ask for help from the many community agencies.
- Call the police. We will respond to your questions and if desired talk with you and your child about gangs.

What Can You Do To Help Eliminate Gang Activity?

You can help to eliminate gang activities by taking the following actions:

- Report all crimes and gang activity to the police.
- Identify any suspects to the police, as well as any of their "street names." Remember information can be kept confidential.
- Remember that we cannot do the job alone, and we need the help of those in the community.

What Can School Officials Do To Help?

Teachers, safety aides, counselors, administrators, and coaches can help to identify gang members or those at risk by taking the following actions:

- Monitor known gang members.
- Monitor associates who are commonly seen with known gang members.

- Discourage those that may be at risk, especially in *elementary and middle schools.*
- Recognize graffiti that students may mark on books, folders, lockers, clothing.
- Recognize gang related tattoos that students may have .
- Recognize gang related jewelry that students may wear.
- Recognize gang signs used by gang members.
- Work with students and staff to discourage gang involvement and related activities.

How Can Parents Best Discipline Children?

Children who get into trouble have been raised to ignore possible consequences. They had parents who used the "threat, threat, punish" system. It works like this:

1. The child does something the parent doesn't like.
2. The parent says: "If you do that again, your gonna get it!"
3. The kid does it again.
4. The parent says: "I'm warning you, one more time and your really gonna get it!"
5. The kid does it again.
6. The parent explodes and punishes.

Sometimes 3 and 4 are repeated before 6 occurs. Children do not understand why there was no punishment the first 2 times, but there was the third time. This teaches them that consequences are not absolute. They become accustomed to random, unreasonable punishment that changes with the mood of the parent. They see it as a lie if you threaten more than one time (in their life) and then threaten again. "You said if I did it again I would get *time out.* I did it again and did not get *time out.* You just threatened me again. You lied when you said if I did it again I would get *time out.*" This teaches kids to lie. If the punishment is physical and angry, minor problems in school or with the law, are nothing next to the torture of day to day life at home.

Children love this discipline system. They want to know you mean what you say and they want to know where the line is located. When they can believe everything you say, they feel secure. It is the lack of security that makes them angry. A minor consequence can do wonders if it is used consistently.

How Can Parent Prevent Gangs?

Many communities (maybe the one you live in) have serious problems with gangs. There are many kinds of gangs, but whatever kind your community is dealing with, gangs spell trouble. They cause fear, destroy property, threaten or hurt peaceable residents, and drive out businesses. Parents can do a lot to prevent gang problems or reduce gang problems already in place. Most important, there is a lot that parents like you can do to keep your own children from joining gangs:

- Learn about gangs and signs of gang activity.
- Sharpen your skills as a parent and use them.
- Join with others to make or keep your neighborhood gang free.

What Do Parents Need to Learn About Gangs?

Young people (as young as six) join gangs for reasons that make sense to them, if not to you. They give reasons like these: belong to a group, excitement, protection, money (#1 reason), and friendship. Gangs leave signs of their presence. Your child may adopt some of those signs as either a gang member or an imitator:

- specific colors or emblems
- special hand signals
- gang symbols on walls as graffiti or on books or clothing
- major and negative behavior changes, such as worse grades, staying out without good reason, "hanging" with known or suspected gang members, or carrying weapons
- wearing certain kinds and colors of clothing in very specific ways
- possessing unexplained, relatively large sums of money

How to Sharpen Your Skills as a Parent?

Many gang members say they joined because the gang offered them support, caring, and a sense of order and purpose —all the things that most parents want to give their kids. The odds are that the better you meet these needs, the less need your children will see for gangs. Here are some parenting skills that are especially important:

- Talk with and listen to your child. Spend some special time with each child.
- Put a high value on education and help your child to do his or her best in school. Do everything possible to prevent dropping out.
- Help your kids identify positive role models and heroes—especially people right in your community.
- Do everything possible to involve your children in supervised, positive group activities.,
- Praise them for doing well and encourage them to do their very best—to stretch their skills to the utmost.
- Know what your children are doing and who they are with. Know about their friends and their friends and families.
- Don't forget to talk about gangs. The best time is before there's a major problem.
- Tell your child that you disapprove of gangs; you don't want to see your child hurt or arrested, you see your child as special, and worth protecting; you want to help your child with problems; family members don't keep secrets from

each other, and you and other parents are working together against gangs.

- family members don't keep secrets from each other, and you and other parents are working together against gangs
- Don't forget to listen to your child as well!

Conclusion

Everyone (except gang members) wants a gang-free community. Parents stand to lose the most —the well being or even the life of a child—if gangs take or keep hold. But gangs are often violent and intimidating. What can you do in the face of this?

First, develop positive alternatives. Are there after- school and weekend activities kids can enjoy? Can the school offer its facilities? Can parents organizé clubs or sports? Can older kids tutor or mentor younger ones? Can the kids themselves help with ideas?

Second, talk with other parents. For one thing, you will find out what everyone else's parent really said. For another, you can support each other and share knowledge that will help spot problems sooner than you can on your own.

Third, *work with the police* and other agencies. Report suspicious activity, set up a Neighborhood Watch or a community patrol; let the police know about gang graffiti, get (and share with other parents) the facts on the gang problem in your community, find out what local services—nonprofit as well as government—will work with communities against gangs.

Fourth, get organized against the gang organization. Use your neighborhood association or a new group. Get help from a variety of sources right in you community such as: priests or ministers, family counselors, community associations, school counselors or principals, athletic coaches, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, YWCA, Scouts, drug abuse prevention groups, youth-serving agencies, and community centers. Working together as communities and families, we can prevent and reclaim our youth from gang involvement. ■

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Chapter 8

Reality Check: How To Talk To Your Kids About Marijuana

Ron Alt

The Reality Check Campaign is a nationwide effort to prevent and reduce the growing problems associated with Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs. Problems associated with marijuana use among youth is the primary campaign focus.

There is no doubt, problems involving marijuana are on the rise. Since the early 1990's, studies have shown a marked increase in the use of marijuana by persons 12- to 17- years old. Additionally, stronger strains of marijuana are available than in the past, and mixing marijuana with PCP or crack cocaine in the form of a "blunt," a hollowed-out cigar, has become increasingly popular. At the same time, fewer youth believe that there is any great risk of harm in occasional use.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHSA/CSAP) developed Reality Check, a multi-media campaign designed to prevent new use and reduce existing use of marijuana. The campaign theme is "Marijuana Is a Drug. Help Our Kids Understand." This campaign is about helping concerned people —whether they are parents, teachers, police officers, religious leaders, business owners, or other youth— get the message across to young people that marijuana is a dangerous drug. The campaign goals involve: increasing awareness about dangerous drugs; assisting young people in refusing marijuana or quitting drug use; involving adult caregivers and mentors; and changing pro-use norms.

To reach these goals and to deliver the Reality Check campaign to Chatham and Effingham Counties in the state of Georgia, a collaborative effort was developed. The Chatham- Effingham Regional Board 18 provided funding through a special prevention grant. The Mental Health Association of the Coastal Empire in conjunction with the Chatham County Council on Alcohol and Drugs and the Partners for Community Health developed a proposal that was approved and was delivered within six months.

The local campaign included alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) with emphasis on marijuana. Elements of the campaign included: (1) A comprehensive community education plan initiated through a media campaign designed to increase public awareness of the problem and reduction of youth access to ATOD products. (2) Prevention training and education for professional and community groups, including parenting education and training for a variety of populations, including a special emphasis on teaching parents how to talk to kids about drugs. (3) The campaign also included a community assessment.

All workshops were based on factual information and were coordinated and delivered throughout Chatham and Effingham Counties resource people. The workshops were designed by the author, a master addiction counselor and certified preventionist, and Trainer of Trainers, provided instruction regarding prevention strategies, protective factors and parent survival tips. The workshops were one hour, two hours, or four hours long and were designed to meet the needs of the attendees.

Donna Shalala, Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services states in the introduction to *A Guide for Keeping Youth Drug-Free* that "the key is to talk to our children—often and early—and to send clear and consistent messages that we don't want them using alcohol, tobacco, and drugs." This advice sounds easy, but most parents do not deliver this message to their children. According to a 1995 SAMHSA report, the rate of marijuana use among youth 12- to 17- years old more than doubled over the past four years. Part of the reason for this is that marijuana is "considered" a harmless drug and this is confusing to both parents and youth. Parents need to realize marijuana is not harmless. An OJJDP (1995) study verifies that approximately one in four youth that are in detention centers tested positive for marijuana. Most parents want to talk to their kids, but many parents simply don't take the time, don't know that to say or don't know how to say it.

As Program Manager for the Housing Authority of Savannah's Drug Elimination Program, this author manages a program that has a primary goal of preventing an increase in drug use among public housing youth. In a 1996 article that appears in the book *At-Risk Issues: Collaborative Ventures* (Warkentin, and Rea, 1996), the author states "Residents are starting to understand that certain risk factors can be predictors of future problem behaviors. Residents are starting to understand that they can make a difference, that they can be a protective factor that can make a difference" (p. 139). Parents need to take charge. Parents need to realize that they are the number one protective factor in their child's life. They also need to learn the facts and need to deliver those facts to their kids. Many public housing parents in Savannah are doing this, other parents need to follow their example.

A Reality Check can help to empower the parents (or grand- parents, elders, mentors, or other caregivers) to talk to their kids and deliver the facts about drug use and abuse. The purpose of this workshop and other Reality Check workshops is to train participants to train others to deliver Reality Check or to use it in their own personal lives. It is vital that we educate everyone in our community about the dangers of marijuana use. We must fight the glamorization of marijuana by arming everyone with the facts.

The Reality Check Kit

The Reality Check Community Kit is a valuable resource. The author utilized this kit along with other professional materials and interactive devices to train the workshop participants. The Kit explains the campaign theme and campaign goals. The campaign theme is "Marijuana Is a Drug: Help Our Kids Understand." We encourage campaign leaders to adapt this theme to their own community or group and own materials. For instance, "Marijuana Is a Drug. Help Housing Authority of Savannah's Kids Understand" or "Help Your Kids Understand." This campaign is about helping concerned people (whether they are parents, teachers, police officers, religious leaders, business owners, or other youth) get the message across that marijuana is a dangerous drug.

Campaign Goals

Increasing awareness. One of the major goals of the campaign involved increasing public awareness of marijuana use and effects. Focus groups and other research show that there are many misconceptions about marijuana use among adults and youth. For example, many people are unaware that marijuana use has been on a steady incline since the early 1990's; or that marijuana is frequently mixed with other drugs, such as PCP or crack; or that developmental skills can be affected in even occasional users. Simply providing the facts will go a long way to helping people understand the problems marijuana causes.

Assist young people in refusing marijuana or quitting use. Young people need help in learning why and how they should stay away from marijuana. They need tools to decipher the pro-use messages they receive throughout society and refuse to become users.

Involve adult caregivers and mentors. Many people throughout a community have direct access to and impact on youth. They can deliver prevention messages and talk with children about their problems and concerns. Parents, caregivers, teachers, coaches, ministers, rabbis, elders, and others are excellent role models who have a substantial positive influence on children in their care.

Change pro-use norms. Marijuana symbols and rhetoric can be seen and heard throughout our society, in songs and movies, in the media, and throughout popular culture. We must challenge these norms and remind our youth about the problems associated with marijuana use. And while the number are rising, we must remind youth continually that over eighty-three percent of 12- to 17-years old have never even tried marijuana.

All of the local Reality Check workshops have a simple goal: to deliver a "Reality Check" that will provide participants with information and techniques that will help them work more effectively with youth. Several objectives of these workshops include: (a) discussing issues involving marijuana and other drugs; (b) exploring warning signs of marijuana use; and (c) providing prevention strategies.

Reality Check Workshops

The key to a workshop is the facilitator's ability to gain the involvement of the participants. After a few ice breakers, participants are introduced to a defuzzing wheel. A handout utilizes a wheel with spokes extending out, which can be used to write in responses to a question, "What behaviors and/or problems will a 'stoned' —under the influence—teen have?" Answers usually include the munchies, loss of balance, laughing, glassy eyes, a buzz, giggly, disoriented, moody, loss of memory, confused thinking, poor judgment, drowsiness . . . to name a few. Each spoke on the wheel is discussed and the participants share with each other *their* answers in an interactive exercise. This allows the participants to look at marijuana from *their* point of view and allows "it" to be "defuzzed" and defined in a collaborative group process.

Facts are then presented utilizing the Reality Check Community Kit(s): Ten Good Reasons To Focus On Marijuana. The following reasons provide excellent information that can be used by individuals who are interested in making an effort to stop the use of marijuana in their community. The following facts may be disturbing, but they will raise awareness and provide a reason for mobilizing people in a community to action.

(1) Marijuana usage has more than doubled among 12- to 17- years-old since 1992. For a variety of reasons, many more young people are trying marijuana and using it on a regular basis than were doing so even a few years ago.

(2) Marijuana has devastating effects on individuals: stunting emotional and intellectual skill growth, instilling a feeling of apathy, compromising health, and exposing young people to the drug culture when they are young and vulnerable.

(3) Marijuana is frequently mixed with other drugs (such as PCP) to increase potency. It is therefore impossible to predict the strength of marijuana, or the effect the mixture is likely to have, or the danger that may result.

(4) Greater supplies of more potent strains of marijuana are available today than 10 years ago. We are dealing with increased risk involved in the use of this drug — and more serious problems. We all need to be reeducated about marijuana so that we can help young people understand and avoid this dangerous substance.

(5) Marijuana hurts families: from the babies who are born to users, to the teens who find themselves betraying the trust of their parents and other caregivers, to the caregivers who are confused and hurt by their children's use.

(6) Marijuana hurts communities. Violence and other crimes have been attributed directly to marijuana use. Businesses pay the costs of unmotivated, under-skilled workers who are likely to come to work high, use more sick leave, and file more worker's compensation claims. Health care systems are overtaxed by illnesses and casualties attributed to marijuana use.

(7) Some people perceive that marijuana is a relatively harmless drug. Because media coverage of the problems associated with marijuana have been overshadowed by the dramatic coverage of other drugs such as crack cocaine and heroin, and because many of today's parents grew up at a time when marijuana use was considered harmless, the message about the real dangers of this drug have not been adequately communicated to young people.

(8) Almost all users of other drugs —such as cocaine, crack cocaine, and heroin— also use marijuana or have used marijuana in the past. Therefore, if we can help young people avoid becoming involved with marijuana, we'll have a greater chance of helping them avoid problems with other drugs as well.

(9) Families are confused about how they should address marijuana with their

children. Many parents and guardians would like to talk with their children about marijuana and other drugs but are not sure how. They need help!

(10) Young people often know less about marijuana than they do about other drugs, such as crack cocaine, cocaine, or heroin. Although marijuana is usually one of the first illicit drugs youth encounter, some drug prevention programs do not spend a concentrated effort helping them understand the dangers involved with this drug or learning ways to avoid contact with it.

During the workshops, all individuals have an opportunity to reexamine the ten reasons listed above by constructing a 2-3 word synopsis of each reason. Each participant is also asked to vote on their top reasons to focus on marijuana: (1) Increase in use; (2) Devastating effects on youth; (3) Unpredictable mixture; (4) Stronger and more powerful; (5) Hurtful effects on the family; (6) Hurtful effects on the community; (7) Perception of harmless; (8) Gateway drug; (9) Difficult to address; (10) Seldom discussed. The top choices are usually: Devastating effects on youth; and Hurtful effects on the family; but all choices are usually named.

Marijuana Menu

During the workshop, a Marijuana Menu is introduced. This menu is intended to serve as a listing of possible warning signs of drug use, not an exhaustive list, but simply some key signs to get the audience thinking and discussing the topic.

Some signs of being high on marijuana include: poor coordination; slight dizziness or trouble walking; silly giggling for no reason; very red, blood shot eyes; hard time remembering things that just happened; "the munchies". Other l ong term effects include: poor short-term memory (chronic); poor grades or work performance; reduced sports performance; decreased interest in activities; withdrawal or depression; negative change in appearance. Other warning signs of drug use include physical evidence such as drug paraphernalia (papers, pipes); marijuana and smoky odor on clothes, in the bedroom or in a vehicle; "over use" of incense and/or other deodorizers; "over use" of eye drops; or clothing, posters, jewelry which promoting drug use.

One may note that taken separately some of the signs above could be typical adolescent behavior and that some of the long term effects could indicate other problem behaviors. But if a young person exhibits one-to-three of the signs indicating being high, and one-to-three of the signs from "long term effects" together with any from physical evidence signs, this should lead to an intervention.

During the workshop, prevention strategies are presented with detailed examples of each strategy. These strategies include: (1) Information dissemination; (2) Prevention education; (3) Alternatives; (4) Problem identification and referrals; (5) Community-based process; (6) Environmental approaches. This final workshop discussion is a more elaborate for teachers, professionals, treatment or prevention specialists. The discussion is more concrete and action oriented for parents.

The Reality Check Challenge

Youth and adults *are* using drugs in this country. We need to stay focused on Prevention —on youth or we will have many more adults and many more major problems and costs for society to deal with. Our world is much different today than in the 1960's. It runs at a much faster pace and the parents are much busier. Sometimes they are too busy to support or influence their kids in being drug free—or they don't know how to talk to them.

Everyone needs a Reality Check and everyone needs to deliver a Reality Check in their home, or neighborhood, or classroom. Everyone needs to empower youth and help them to understand their choices and challenges. ■

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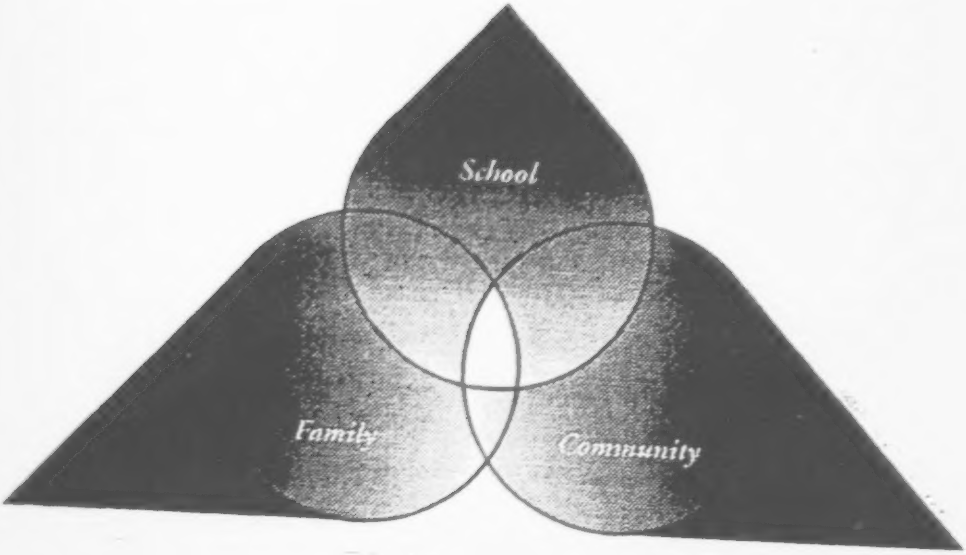
III. EMPOWERING YOUTH WITH LIFE SKILLS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Chapter 9

The Need to Empower Youth with Critical Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Skills

Rosemary Thompson

Dateline 1998: Jonesboro, Arkansas; Edinboro, Pennsylvania; Paducah, Kentucky; Houston, Texas; Springfield, Oregon—another school, another senseless case of children murdering children. Indications of troubled young people are all too familiar: school dropouts, drug abuse, unintended pregnancy, crime, violence, homicide, and suicide. The threats to the physical, social, and emotional well-being of today's youths are unparalleled in human history. This pervasive condition will have long range implications for schools and communities, business and industry, children and families. The litany of statistics on child and adolescent well-being reflect family breakdown, poverty, violence, and abuse. The growing list of responsibilities American schools have undertaken in the last decade: violence prevention, AIDS/HIV education, English as a second language, family life education, substance abuse prevention, crisis intervention, and safe schools initiatives— ad infinitum—reflect the changing demographics that strain available resources in order to provide critical services.

More American children of this generation have been raised in daycare than ever before, or they have spent long hours alone at home while two parent families *forged dual careers*, or a single parent *juggled two jobs* to make ends meet. In an era of rapid change, our young people have learned to accept the impermanence of even the most intimate relationship (Hersch, 1990). They have also learned to become desensitized to the horror of violence; to gradually accept violence as a way to solve problems; to imitate the violence they observed on television; and to identify with certain characters or victimizers. These adverse societal conditions have created emotional, social, and intellectual deficits in many of our children.

Yard and Puricelli (1989) maintain that a volatile mismatch exists between the organization and curriculum of schools and the intellectual, social, and emotional needs of children and adolescents (p. 2). This is emerging within the context of family dysfunction, changing family structure, increased ethnic diversity, and lack of respect for authority. Furthermore, the social, emotional and cognitive potential of youth are threatened by alcohol and other drugs, gangs, suicide, violence and influences in the media.

If our youths are to overcome intellectual, social, and emotional deficits caused by adverse societal conditions, they need compensatory training in these life skills. A psychoeducational model is proposed to develop students' emotional, social, and intellectual skills. The goal of this model is to strengthen students' skills so they can meet life's challenges with maximized resiliency. These life skills can be systematically taught and cultivated to give young people advantages with both their interpersonal and intrapersonal adjustments, and with their academic success. In the following sections the components of the social, emotional, and intellectual skills are fully identified and explained. Finally, a six step psychoeducational model for developing these life skills is described.

Identified Social Skills

Social literacy skills are interpersonal skills essential for meaningful interaction with others. One definition of social skills has been termed the *social validity* definition by Gresham (1983):

> Social skills are situationally specific behaviors that predict important social outcomes for youth. In school settings, important social outcomes include, but are not limited to: (a) peer acceptance, (b) significant other's judgments of social skill, (c) academic achievement, (d) self-concept, and (e) school adjustment (p.36).

Gresham and Elliott (1990) found that cooperation, assertion, responsibility and self control represented major clusters of social skills. Social literacy skills are interpersonal skills essential for meaningful interaction with others. Social skills are those behaviors which, within a given situation predict important social outcomes such as peer acceptance, popularity, self-efficacy, competence, and high self-esteem. Social skills fall into categories such as: being kind, cooperative, and compliant to reduce defiance, aggression, conflict, and antisocial behavior; showing interest in people and socializing successfully to reduce behavior problems associated with withdrawal, depression and fearfulness. Social literacy skills include problem solving, assertiveness, impulse control, resolving conflict, managing anger, and utilizing peer pressure refusal skills.

Social skills ensure positive and effective interpersonal relationships. It is imperative that children and adolescents are taught how to become more socially competent using the same strategies that we use to teach academic skills, i.e., instruction, practice, and feedback. For example, "I'm sorry," is a social skill of reconciliation. Children can redeem their self-esteem rather than sitting in isolation with anger, shame, and hostility in "time out" discipline models. Guiding children and adolescents toward positive social behaviors and emotional understanding, helps them understand "what they are to do," and " how to do it," rather than isolating them from the process through the overuse of punishment and humiliation. Social skills reduce the number of negative experience youths may encounter in their relationships in school, home, and community. For specific examples of training activities for social skills see figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1

Social Literacy Skill: Perception Checking

Perception Checking is giving and receiving feedback on the accuracy of communication.

- Paraphrase what you think you heard.
- Ask for confirmation directly from the person about the accuracy of your perception of what was said.
- Allow the other person to "correct your perception" of what was said, if it was inaccurate.

"You seem to be very irrated with me; am I correct?"
"You seem to hesitate, is my perception accurate?"
"I was wondering if the plan you selected is the one you really wanted?"

Figure 2

Social Literacy Skill: Sending an "I" Message

"I feel ____________________________ when you _______________________ because ____________________." "Jack I feel neglected when you don't return my phone calls, because I really need your opinion on this project."

Identified Emotional Skills

The concept of emotional literacy was first proposed by Salovey & Mayer (1990). Emotional deficits observed in youths include short attention span, impulsive behavior, slowed language development, and poor sequential memory. Many young people manifest difficulty knowing the difference between feelings and behavior. This often unrecognized inability intensifies their sensation of being out-of-control. For example, in the classroom, abused children often direct their attention toward interpreting their teacher's mood as a learned survival technique to anticipate a parent's unpredictable behavior, which may range from indifference to aggression. Children living with violence in abusive home environments exhibit social, emotional, and cognitive dysfunctions. The long-term effects of violence influences how children encode material to be learned, and *how they interpret and act on new information.* Abusive family environments influence children's problem-solving behaviors. These behaviors in turn can affect both social competence and school achievement. There is a growing body of research linking social, emotional, and cognitive processes (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, Shriver, 1997). Emerging theories of cognitive development acknowledge the role played by social context and interpersonal relationships. Learning is enhanced or hampered by emotions; emotions drive learning and memory.

Emotional literacy skills are *intrapersonal skills* and abilities such as: knowing

Figure 3

Emotional Literacy Skill: Coping Self-Talk for Stressful Situations

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- *Prior Preparation:* I have a plan for coping with stress. I can deal with this, I've done it before. I know how to relax myself.
- *Entering the Stress Zone:* I have a plan, I'll follow it. It will be over before I know it. I won't worry about what others think, I'm above this.
- *Coping with My Emotions:* I can breathe deeply and relax my tense spots. I can think positively and visualize tranquility. I will personally grow from this experience. I can call on ____________________ to support me on this.
- *Rewarding Success:* I made it through, I knew I could! I am becoming better everyday. On a scale of one-to-ten, I rate myself as a ______ on this experience ____________ I've got to tell ________________ how well I did.

Figure 4

Emotional Literacy Skill: Requesting Assertively

To convey your thoughts, feelings, and wants assertively, follow this simple formula:

"I think ________________ (your perception); "I feel __________________ ("I" message); I want _____________________ (an assertive request).

"When you joke me in front of my friends you make me look stupid." "I feel embarrassed and angry. I want you to stop."

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one's emotions by recognizing a feeling as it happens; managing emotions (i.e., to shake off anxiety, gloom, irritability and the consequences of failure); motivating oneself to attain goals, delaying gratification, stifling impulsiveness, and maintaining self control; recognizing emotions in others with empathy and perspective taking; and handling interpersonal relationships effectively. Emotional skills fall into categories such as knowing the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions; establishing a sense of identity and acceptance of self; learning to value teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation; emotional processing and centering practices such as silent reflection; regulating one's mood; and the ability to maintain hope. The most visible emotional skills are the ability to express empathy, sensitivity, and tolerance of perceived differences. For specific examples of training activities for emotional skills see figures 3 and 4.

Identified Cognitive Skills

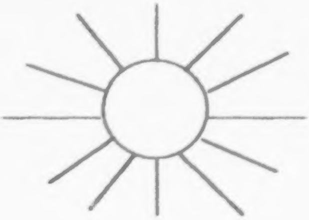
Educators can no longer conceptualize the process of learning as the result of rote memory and mnemonic strategies that merely link meaningless bits of information to each other. Much of the contemporary research on thinking and learning challenges the way teachers teach and the way students learn. In addition, the rapid emergence of electronic media has literally catapulted us into new communication venues. The

Figure 5
Cognitive Literacy Skill: Critical Thinking

A.S.S.U.M.E acronym. Assume assertions are present. Search deliberately for hidden messages. Sense gaps in logic. Use linking statements to check validity. Make revisions to clarify. Express revised statement.

Figure 6
Cognitive Literacy Skill: Patterning

ATTRIBUTE WEB: Place topic in center of web. Brainstorm attributes of given topic, placing each attribute on a line of the web.



productive workers of the next millennium must *be able to think for a living.* The new demands of the information/electronic age require skills in patterned thinking. Skills for the knowledge and information age include: (a) *communication* skills such as writing, public speaking, listening, reading and researching; (b) *interpersonal skills* such as leadership, managing, negotiating, and arbitrating; (c) *personal skills* such as self-management, time management, and the assessment of skills and abilities of others; and (d) *information skills* such as organizing, researching, and problem solving.

Cognitive psychologists advocate teaching youths a repertoire of cognitive and metacognitive strategies such as using graphic organizers, and understanding organizational patterns; self-monitoring, self-questioning, and self-regulating; enhancing study skills, deciphering codes, understanding abstract formulas, and making metacognitions. Cognitive skills also include higher order thinking skills such as: knowing how to problem solve, describe, associate, conceptualize, classify, analyze, evaluate, make inferences and think critically. Analytical thinking involves researching, organizing, speaking, writing and the understanding of technology. Quantitative and scientific reasoning also includes ethical applications (i.e., the ability to apply moral standards and appreciate values). For specific examples of training activities for intellectual skills see figures 5 and 6.

The Psychoeducational Life Skill Teaching Model

Nurturing social, emotional, and cognitive literacy skills can be accomplished using a *Psychoeducational Life Skills Teaching Model* that can be easily implemented in programs and services for children and adolescents, as well as adult. Psychoeducational Life Skill Teaching is the most comprehensive approaches to the remediation and enhancement of interpersonal effectiveness. Innovative skills delivery system emphasizes a psychoeducational model in which (a) help is provided by a counselor, teacher, helping professional; (b) a person's difficulties are seen as gaps in knowledge or deficits rather than maladaptive behavior patterns; and (c) the person is active in the design of his or her individualized program rather than being the recipient of an expert directed therapeutic intervention (Larson, 1984).

The emphasis is on education to help people cope with predictable, developmental tasks or deficits (Adkins, 1985). In schools, it is the hidden curriculum that attempts to develop social behaviors, values, and attitudes thought to be important to school and society, i.e., to prepare students for the business of effective living (Gazda, 1984). The instructional techniques are derived from social learning theory. Role playing appears spontaneously in the behavior of children, and is a fundamental force of *self-development* and *interpersonal learning*. Children and adolescents need these prerequisite skills to defeat dysfunctional behaviors and enhance their self-efficacy.

The helping professional assumes the role of teacher, model, evaluator, encourager, facilitator, and leader (Gazda, 1984). Role playing within the *Life Skill Teaching Session* provides opportunities: (a) to try out rehearse and practice new learning in a safe setting; (b) to discover how comfortable new behaviors are; (c) to assess which alternative actions work best; and (d) to practice and repractice newly learned skills by reality testing. Essentially, intellectual insight alone is not sufficient to change self-defeating behavior.

Goldstein (1988) developed a *life skill training session* to help youth integrate life skills into their behavioral repertoire in a group setting. Teaching a life skill session or lesson follows a five-step learning model: *instruction* (teach); *modeling* (show); *role play* (practice); *feedback* (reinforce) and *ownwork* (apply). These steps are used to reinforce desired behavior. A modification of the five-step group model is outlined below. Steps are outlined according to what the group leader should say and do to help youth integrate social, emotional, and cognitive skills into one's behavioral repertoire. Training sessions are a series of "action-reaction" sequences in which effective skill behaviors are first rehearsed (role play), and then critiqued (feedback). Groups cover one skill in one or two sessions. Every member of the group role plays the given skill correctly at least once. Role playing is intended to serve as behavioral rehearsal or practice for future use of the skill. The hypothetical future situation rather than a reenactment of the past event should be selected for role playing. Giving participants an opportunity to observe themselves on video tape can be an effective method to respond to verbal and nonverbal behavior and its impact on others. Overlearning the skill by role playing with every group member also is beneficial.

The Psychoeducational Life Skill Teaching Model Process

The six steps of the Life Skill Teaching Model are as follows:

As Group Leader:

1. Present an overview of the social, emotional, or cognitive skill.

   - Ask a question to help the members define the skill in their own language, such as:
   - Who can define *"assertiveness?"* What does *assertiveness* mean to you?"
   - Make a statement about what will follow the modeling of the skill. "After we see the examples, we will talk about times you have used the skill and about how you will use it in the future."
   - Distribute skill cards and asks a member to read the behavioral steps aloud.
   - Ask members to follow each step as the skill is modeled.

As Group Leader:

2. Model the behavior following the steps listed on a flip chart or chalkboard.

3. Invite discussion of the skill that is modeled.

   - "Did any of the situations you observed remind you of times that you had to use the skill?"
   - Encourage a dialogue about skill usage and barriers to implementation.

As Group Leader:

4. Organize a role play between two group members.

   - Designate one member as *practicing member,* i.e., the individual who will be working on integrating a specific social, emotional, or cognitive skill such as assertiveness, impulse control, or problem solving.
   - Ask the *practicing member* to choose a *partner* — someone in the group that reminds him or her of the person with whom they would most likely use the skill. For example,
     "Who in the group reminds you of ________in some way."
   - Set the stage for the role play including props and furniture if necessary. Ask questions such as, "Where will you be talking?" "What will be the time of day?"
   - Rehearses with the *practicing member* what should be said and done during the role play, such as:
     "What will be the first step of the skill." "What will you do if your partner does___________?"

- Provides final instructions to the practicing member and the partner: To the practicing member : "Try to follow the steps as best you can."

  To the partner: "Try to play the part of______ as best as you can by concentrating on what you think ________would do when the practicing member follows the steps."
- Remaining members of the group are designated as observers. Their role is to provide feedback to the *practicing member* and the *partner* after the exercise.

  The role play begins. One group member stands at chalkboard or flip chart to point out each step.

As Group Leader:

- Coach and prompt role players when needed.

As Group Leader:

5. Elicit feedback from group members and processes after the exercise is completed. Generous praise should be mixed with constructive suggestions. Avoid blame and criticism. The focus should be on how to improve. Suggestion should be achievable with practice.

   - The *practicing member* is instructed to wait until everyone's comments have been heard.
   - The *partner* processes his/her role, feelings, and reactions to the *practicing member*.
   - Observers are asked to report on how well the behavioral steps were followed; specific likes and dislikes; and the comments about the role of the *practicing member* and the *partner*.
   - Processes group comments with the *practicing member*. The *practicing* member is asked to respond to how well he or she did in following the behavioral steps of the skill. For example, "On a scale from 1 to 10 how satisfied were you about following the steps?"

As Group Leader:

6. *Encourage follow through and transfer of training to other social, emotional, or* cognitive settings. The practicing member is assigned homework to practice and apply the skill in real life. Group members are assigned to look for situations relevant to the skill they might role play during the next group meeting.

- Ask the *practicing member* how, when, and with whom might he or she attempt the behavioral steps prior to the next group meeting.
- Assign the *"ownwork report"* to get a written commitment from the main actor to try out the new skill and report back to the group the next group meeting.
- Direct members of the group to look for situations relevant to the skill that they might role play during the next group meeting.

Conclusion

Young people across the nation are manifesting serious social, emotional, and cognitive deficits. The indicators of emotional deficits manifest themselves in increased incidents of violence, suicide, and homicides. Cognitive deficits place youths at a disadvantage academically making them more vulnerable to criminal influences. Social deficits manifest themselves with poor peer relations, an inability to resolve conflicts, and manage anger. Contemporary youths are indiscriminately confronted with a number of critical issues and decisions without the understanding or the experience of using critical social, emotional, and cognitive literacy skills. It is important to recognize that skill development is a life time learning experience which include the need to master many skills such as: communication skills, leadership skills, protocol skills, religious ritual skills, self-help skills, athletic skills, employer/employee skills, and relationship skills, to name a select few.

Intervention and prevention strategies must focus on social, emotional, and cognitive literacy skill deficits that seem to permeate all dysfunctional manifestations of child and adolescent high risk behavior. For example, incarcerated youth often have social skill deficits in anger management and conflict resolution skills; the adolescent facing an unintended pregnancy often lacks social and cognitive skills such as assertiveness skills and abstract reasoning (i.e., the ability to see the long-range consequences of high-risk behaviors); and the potential school dropout often manifests the cognitive skill deficits of problem solving, decision-making, and self- management. By using a Psychoeducational Life Skill Teaching Model—social, emotional, and cognitive skills can be systematically taught and cultivated. Social, emotional, and cognitive skills can be integrated into primary prevention or early intervention initiatives to *"help youth think better, feel better, and relate better."* ■

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Chapter 10

Transforming the Leadership Potential of Resilient Youth

Mariam MacGregor

In most schools, social agencies, and intervention programs, leadership development is considered a secondary option for the prevention of at-risk behavior, but it is rarely used as a primary source of prevention. Yet, tapping into the leadership potential of high-risk youth can provide the stimulus for many of these youth to make significant positive life changes. When leadership development is used as a primary source of prevention, at-risk youth have an opportunity to become resilient youth who take charge of their lives and develop the "leader within."

This article highlights a leadership program that transforms high-risk youth into resilient youth. It introduces the reader to a curriculum designed to actualize and validate leadership potential (Boccia, 1997; Freeman, Schwartz, Axtman,1998; MacGregor, 1997, 1998; van Linden, 1998). Although many of the issues addressed in this article relate to schools, much of the information easily translates to social agencies and residential programs.

Leadership and Youth-At-Risk

Leadership and youth-at-risk appear to be opposites to many people. These two terms express a seemingly improbable relationship. Puzzling to some adults is the fact that many at-risk youth are natural leaders. It is easier to believe that leadership skills demonstrated by these youth are misdirected or a fluke. People who do not work closely with this population do not always understand that these leadership skills can be redirected in extremely positive ways. When nurtured appropriately, these youth quickly demonstrate the strength and possibility which comes from tapping unpolished leadership abilities. With little fanfare, they illustrate the potential of leadership that exists within everyone.

As many educators, community members, and parents know, nearly every youth is at risk for some problem at some point in their development. The population to which I am referring includes adolescents who are parents, current or recovering gang members, students with drug/alcohol issues, school drop-outs, gifted underachievers, and those struggling with learning disabilities. My relationships with these teens comes from being a counselor in an alternative school.

These populations make up the "typical" alternative students, the kids who are unlikely to be actively involved at school, or who have stopped attending altogether. The term "alternative" is used because there is no standard way of describing these youth. In some communities, this term has become synonymous with “ troubled youth.” Alternative often describes the interests of these youth as much as it tells of the methods used to educate them.

People frequently ask me about the outcomes of teaching leadership skills to this population — “You’re teaching gangsters how to lead? Don’t you think you will make them better gangsters?” While this seems a reasonable perception, quite the opposite occurs. It seems that not long after our class discussions of ethical decision making, tolerance, power and influence, that many gang members begin to question their “ extracurricular” activities.

Although it may take some time for positive leadership behaviors to take hold, some of the best “positive” leaders coming out of my leadership development programs have been gang members. They can be the most diligent in turning things around, often while still confronting the traditions of their lifestyles and peers with great difficulty. I state this cautiously because I have, unfortunately, also seen leadership capabilities manipulated to perpetuate the status and influence of some street leaders. Yet, as these youth are encouraged to develop and apply prosocial concepts of leadership, the possibility exists that they will confront one another to do the right thing, on the streets and with their friends.

In general, most of these teens are overlooked and undervalued with regards to their potential contributions as leaders in the community. They struggle to survive in a complex environment. Occasionally they survive with guidance from a role model or mentor, but more often they progress under the influence of their peer culture. Their survival tactics may not be socially acceptable, yet in most situations, these tactics are the difference between a day of trauma and a day of managing with what life offers. However, there is very little which connects these tactics of surviving with future goals, other than the fact that a teen makes it through another day. Coping with life this way diminishes the potential development of leadership abilities.

To many at-risk teens, the future is what happens when you are not too stoned or depressed to go on. This way of life becomes “normal” for these teens. With the increasing number of educators, social workers, adult mentors, law enforcement personnel, and counselors trying to reach this population, the emphasizing of leadership skills can redesign the tactics these young people use to cope with life. Their locus of control can change and they can begin to view life with a future — a future which will have them, as leaders, playing an important role in their community. When equipped with leadership skills, at-risk youth become resilient youth who are able to take charge of their destinies instead of drifting through life.

Leadership is simply a socially acceptable skill for dealing with and contributing to life. As evidenced by the more than 4,000 definitions of “leadership” there are more than enough interpretations for youth to accept and apply in their own lives, even in light of the challenges facing them. However, adults expect teens to behave as “leaders” without necessarily helping them develop the skills of being a leader. It is also common to hope that one’s own child will grow up to be a leader. Unfortunately, many adults do not have a personal definition of leadership, let alone standards for behaving as a leader. When measured against "adult" standards of leadership, reflected in political and business leaders, youth are stuck with questionable characteristics to apply to their own leadership abilities. The visible leaders are not always good at modeling leadership, and youth must establish priorities regarding which leadership behaviors they desire to exhibit.

Developing leadership skills can increase resilience and promote healthier methods of dealing with daily difficulties. Leadership skills, such as team building, also promote the practice of relying on others to help with various situations. I once heard a statistic that our nation is a nation of "sometime joiners." It was said that 80% of Americans "sometimes join" or experience something at least once, if they can be persuaded or turned on by the opportunity. The remaining 20% are comprised of 10% "never joiners" and 10% "always joiners."

At-risk youth make up much more than 10% of the population, and yet many adults, including teachers and parents, look at them as the "never joiners." These young people are sometimes perceived as disposable within the school and community setting. They are seen as needing a lot of attention in order to be successful. Their strengths are often not considered. These strengths, when identified and capitalized upon by both the youth and their advocates, can result in leadership potential and inner resilience, which previously was unimagined!

In some settings, involving at-risk youth in leadership programs is treated as a reward for the kids who are finally making positive choices after years of making poor ones. This approach misses a significant population of these youth when not considering leadership development as an opportunity available for all. The issue of rewards can be utilized in leadership development programs, but they should not be used as the gate-keeping device for deciding which youths get to participate in leadership education programs.

All of these elements help clarify the need and potential of developing leadership skills in at-risk youth. These aspects also demonstrate how often the efforts to develop leadership potential are avoided, overlooked, or simply ignored with regard to this population. They deserve formalized leadership education programs to assist them with developing effective, life-long skills to promote positive participation in leadership roles in society.

Leadership 101: A Curriculum

An example of a formalized leadership program is a curriculum in an alternative high school in Colorado which has been developed and evaluated as a way of helping at-risk youth develop "leadership identities" (Boccia, 1997; Freeman, Schwartz, Axtman, 1998; MacGregor, 1997, 1998; van Linden, 1998). Three broad areas set the parameters of this curriculum: *leadership knowledge and sensitivity*, *developing skills*, and *demonstrating leadership competence (application)*. In addition, the curriculum emphasizes high standards, provides experiential opportunities, and maintains a challenging environment designed to enhance critical thinking abilities.

The curriculum is offered as an academic elective and has become a standard selection by most juniors and seniors at that school. Students are nominated by teachers or peers, or they may self-select to participate in this introductory leadership class. Beyond the experiential components of the class (highlighted below), academic applications include a leader research paper, organizational observations (to assess the leadership skills of others), leadership activity reflections, and synthesis through exams.

Leadership Knowledge and Sensitivity

In general, many at-risk youth do not have a functional definition for leadership. They are aware of the term and can refer to individuals who they perceive as leaders. In the early stages of developing leadership knowledge, definitions reflect their personal values, many of which may not be considered leadership qualities in the traditional sense. Teens who are struggling to survive need reasons to *commit* to being a leader. It is difficult for them to "buy into" this commitment until they realize that becoming a leader can help them to improve their lives.

Defining leadership, therefore, becomes a crucial first step in successful leadership programs. The process of personally defining leadership helps to identify who is serious about developing these characteristics. On one hand, teens will be sarcastic about presumably well-known leaders, on the other, they may not even be aware of significant leaders in the world. Having youth brainstorm what comes to mind when defining leadership offers important insight into characteristics they consider meaningful. Likewise, it also allows glimpses into the leadership characteristics they hope others see in them. The characteristics most revered, or most questioned by teens, clarifies what skills can be developed to make youth strong community leaders.

Teens tend to have a collaborative rather than a competitive approach to leadership. In all the times that I have worked with youth leaders to establish working definitions of leadership, terms such as "caring," "empathetic," "sensitive to others," and "team player," top the list. Given young people's receptivity to these positive characteristics, it is imperative to reflect and support the development of these qualities in youth leaders. In addition to these terms, however, terms such as "hypocritical," "manipulative," and "two- faced" also show up on the list. These terms seem to reflect the doubt and criticism that youth apply to current leaders. This awareness of the negative characteristics of some leaders, assists youth in developing realistic leadership qualities and beliefs.

Beyond establishing knowledge and awareness of leadership qualities, it is important that the leadership educator be sensitive to issues considered important in the lives of youth at risk. In order to assist these youth on their path to becoming leaders, they must be treated differently than youth who have been "groomed" as leaders throughout their educational experience. The issue of being taken seriously as emerging leaders can be a dramatic issue for youth who have never been considered "leadership material" in the past.

Leadership development programs for at-risk teens are different than traditional programs. Leadership issues for at- risk youth typically do not revolve around planning a prom or running for student body president. Leadership generally revolves around finding meaning in their own life, having an influence on the choices of their peers, resolving conflict without fighting, and having greater control of personal issues. These teens can be critical of more traditional student leaders who prioritize issues with regard to popularity and recognition by teachers and administrators. Once these teen leaders have learned appropriate and successful methods for dealing with significant issues in their lives, they are more apt to take risks which are not popular with peers, and which may or may not garner recognition by teachers and/or administrators.

Developing Skills

The time spent identifying, defining, and exploring what characteristics make up a leader (or the concept of leadership) creates a readiness for developing these leadership skills. There is loose social agreement regarding which skills are necessary for a person to be perceived, both internally and externally, as a leader. The curriculum emphasizes the development of these skills through observation, interaction, and group discussion. Many of the skills are most deeply learned when the students must interact with one another through activities which require everyone's participation.

The skill building techniques also promote personal leadership awareness. After defining leadership and beginning to identify one's own leadership qualities, the curriculum addresses the following leadership skills and sensitivities: power, influence, authority, communication, building consensus, ethical decision making, building teams, understanding gender differences, developing tolerance, motivation, risk taking, creative thinking, and personal visioning.

Demonstrating Leadership Competence

Most leadership skills and sensitivities take time to enhance and apply at more meaningful levels. The strongest method for accomplishing this is to provide students opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned. As one teaches youth how to lead, it is equally necessary to give them chances to practice how they (as individuals) lead. Methods for encouraging youth to demonstrate their competence include having students "lead" in-class, as well as taking on leadership roles in other safe settings. A "safe" setting is one in which a student can ask for feedback and can make a mistake without being penalized for specific leadership choices/decisions.

In this curriculum, students take on leadership roles for each activity. These roles may include facilitating discussion, leading group activities, role-playing, or serving as consultant to the other students in the class. Once students have successfully completed the introductory curriculum, they are encouraged to participate in more in-depth leadership experiences, specifically a more advanced class designed for students to envision Community Leadership Projects. These projects typically involve a school or wider community issue for which students desire to change the status quo or wish to try a novel approach to creating solutions for the issue.

Opportunities to apply and practice leadership behaviors does not have to take the form of another leadership class. These youth have numerous places where they can apply what they have learned. In most cases, it is important to provide an environment where these young leaders feel that they are taken seriously and where they will be given a chance to demonstrate what they can do as leaders in their community.

Conclusion

Most high-risk youths with whom I have worked say that the most important benefit they receive from seeing themselves as leaders (and having others view them as such) is the ability to stand up for what they believe. Social standards tend to label and limit the expectations that others have of them. Many adults, including counselors and educators, believe that leadership development has a remote chance of success for these teens. These professionals often discount teens' leadership potential because of their problems with substance abuse, broken families, pregnancy, risk of dropping out, and gang involvement. For these reasons too many of these teens have not been given a chance to stand up and be counted.

Painfully aware that others predict their failure, they generally do not take risks to make a positive difference in their surroundings. They are acutely aware of how others have helped or hindered their pursuit for self-identity and personal value. This hard won awareness makes them very receptive to those who believe in them. When these teens are invited, encouraged, and supported to develop the "leader within," the change in their outlook and the quality of their contribution can be immeasurable. Provided with this support, these so called at-risk youth defy the limiting odds and expectations of others and become resilient youth who take charge of their destinies and lead productive lives. ■

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Chapter 11

Breaking Down the Walls of Silence: An Expressive Arts Approach to Youth Empowerment

Lois Leibowitz-Saperstein

As Executive Director of Center for the Arts and the ARTROADS program, I have been weaving the expressive arts throughout communities, partnering with schools, community centers, treatment facilities, private schools, Municipal Alliances for the Prevention of Substance Abuse, and the affiliate organizations of The National Councils on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence in each New Jersey County. I have worked in cooperation with all these organizations developing and facilitating various programs.

The goal of the ARTROADS program is to use the expressive arts as a platform to transform the lives of "youth-at-risk" and thereby enhance the protective factors within themselves. The arts can be used to buttress the emotional, behavioral, cognitive and cultural competencies as resiliency factors. The arts provide options, challenges, and an effective means for promoting change.

Giving Artistic Expression to the Adolescent's Inner Turmoil

The arts have the power to reach our young people with positive messages. As they discover the arts, self-esteem and self-confidence grow. The arts serve as vehicles to deliver strong enduring messages, giving the youth in our communities the tools needed to improve their lives and in turn the life of our communities.

Adolescence is a time of change and turmoil. It is a period that demands coming to terms with new challenges, often a time of crisis. Given the tensions on all levels—physical, emotional, social, sexual, psychological, and cognitively, it is no surprise that many adolescents are on the brink of explosion. Although their need to express and communicate their internal world is great, they have not yet acquired the capacity to verbally articulate what they think and feel. They are not at a level of awareness, in which they can reflect with perspective and distance on their thoughts and feelings. A form of expression is desperately needed, one which matches the intensity and complexity of their experiences. This form of expression needs to be direct but non-threatening. The creative arts provides a constructive means of expressing the inner explosiveness of adolescence (Emunah, 1990).

All *arts* can be engaged on an individual or group basis and all possess multidimensional and complex characteristics. The art specialist or the trained counselor, who not only perceives the adolescent's handiwork as a work of art but more importantly acknowledges the expression of self it encompasses, can serve as a witness and guide to the adolescent.

At the same time that the arts provide a means of expressing the pain of this life passage, they also engage the adolescent's strengths, idealism and healthful inner resources. According to Lisa Nussbaum, a certified alcohol and drug counselor, who consults for an alternative high school and provides outpatient counseling in New Jersey:

> Using creative arts therapy techniques in the prevention and treatment of alcohol and other drug use has been positive both in group and individual counseling with clients. Creative arts such as art therapy and psychodrama assist clients in developing insight and awareness into both their thoughts and feelings which provides a deeper sense of knowing for themselves regarding their choices. In groups for high risk adolescents growing up in alcoholic and drug affected families, creative arts techniques helps clients to become more aware both intellectually and emotionally of their choices, and opens up avenues for healing and healthy living. (personal communication, 1997)

It is important to remember that although expression is in itself healthful, it is only a first step.

ARTROADS: Empowering Youth Though Creative Experiences

Art in the ARTROADS program is defined as the synthesis of sensory experiences and their representations. Thus described, art is one means by which human beings organize their experiences in order to understand and communicate. The use of art activities provides the methodological framework for the program. Arts activities are viewed by most students as the most socializing activity in school. For these activities academic standards and proprieties are not the norm. Arts activities provide a hands on, creative and relaxed environment in which the student tends to interact freely and can choose either verbal or non-verbal methods of participation. There is no "failing" in the use of art for task oriented groups like that of ARTROADS. That is, the acceptance of everyone's perceptions as real though not necessarily the only viewpoint clearly represents a self-esteem builder.

The arts can channel energy into positive quests for better education, stronger family life and a richer community experience. The arts play a powerful and effective role in developing prevention skills. By participating in the creation of art, new skills are learned. These skills often apply not only to the arts, but to life in general.

This is the rationale for ARTROADS. The arts provide for active participation. It is learning by experiencing, by doing. The arts use an integrative approach. Art uses abilities that include the intuitive, image oriented, timeless, creative, open and holistic behaviors of the human being as well as functions that are more analytical, logical, linear, verbal structured, and time-oriented. This brings a balanced approach to learning.

Prevention education has generally used an "outside in" (didactic) approach to learning. The arts use an "inside out" approach. The arts offer options, challenges, and an inner means to change. The arts build up the emotional, cognitive, cultural and behavioral competencies as resiliency factors. "Art is a way to 'see' what is inside of oneself instead of looking outside of oneself for answers" (Chickerneo, 1993, p. 13). Emotional/social resilience should be seen in the larger context of how the arts can contribute to the healthy growth of the adolescent living in the whole community.

The creative arts focus on what is and what can be, not on what is missing. This critical distinction sets the stage for young people to discover new ways of learning, communicating, working, and behaving. Multiple objectives are infused into the overall program incorporating information into the projects as they proceed. Art develops life-skills *internally*, thus reducing adolescents' resistance to change. This is unlike the typical prevention program that imposes external change and encounters resistance.

The positive developmental outcomes identified in resilience research are the same characteristics that the creative arts enhance in youth: social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. Social competence includes responsiveness to others, empathy and caring, good communication skills and a sense of joy and humor. Problem- solving skills encompass planning ability, seeing alternatives, critical thinking and resourcefulness. Autonomy refers to one's sense of identity, self-worth, internal locus of control, self- efficacy, self-awareness and sense of imagination. A sense of purpose and future includes not only goal directedness and achievement motivation but also persistence, optimism, hope, spiritual connectedness and ultimately a sense of meaning in one"s life. The arts foster the unfolding of human resilience by meeting our developmental needs and drives for love and belonging, respect, mastery, power and meaning (Benard, 1997).

ARTROADS provides an expanded view of what is possible. Working in the arts provides opportunities for self-directed expression that is not wholly dependent on adults and their institutions. The arts help develop self-sufficiency and increase self-esteem in small imperceptible steps. In the words of one young student, "I am building my own way of seeing and talking about my world, and own the patent."

The inclusion of sociodramatic enactments infuses a peer education component into the program by virtue of the group work, sharing and performances. It is an interactive program that promotes prevention education to the participants and to their families and friends. Sociodrama as an educational modality, directs its attention to human growth and interaction by attending to collective role aspects. It also promotes human development in a global way through communication, inspiration, and the transmission of information. Sociodrama actively immerses the participant in the process (Garcia & Sternberg, 1996).

Why not give students of all ages practice in solving ethical dilemmas and give them the experience of clarifying their own values through sociodramatic enactment? One of the beauties of sociodrama is that rather than listen to a lecture on what is right and wrong, participants can find answers that are right for the them at their particular stage of development.

Through ARTROADS, students participate in a creative process, where they are supported to grow and to develop. The students are related to as human beings who are capable of unlimited development. In a supportive environment young people become creators and builders, and together they can explore and learn about a multitude of life choices.

During all this creative activity, they begin to learn many practical skills and most importantly, they learn how to work together and to build a positive community. This experience, which involves decision making, planning, communicating and taking responsibility is crucial to learning how to make all kinds of life decisions.

Studies have shown that information is not enough, that the most effective prevention program supplemented basic information with essential emotional and social skills. These programs teach adolescents to find ways to solve interpersonal conflicts more positively and creatively, to have more self-confidence, noËt to always blame themselves if something negative happens and to feel that they have a network of support (W.T. Grant Consortium, 1992). The arts engage adolescents and buttress these skills in an atmosphere of non-judgmental attitudes, acceptance and caring. We want the youth to become stakeholders in their own program and in their own destiny.

Creating a New Scenario: The Power of Choice

Take a young girl who has a school phobia in the seventh grade and starts drinking to handle her social anxieties. By her late twenties, she ends up in a treatment facility, diagnosed with emotional disorders. Trying to escape her fears, she has become an alcohol and drug abuser. She is depressed because her life is so messed up. The big question is what could we have done in the beginning stages to have headed off the whole downward spiral?

If, during middle school, the above mentioned young girl had an art program building on her social/emotional skills, what new outcomes might have resulted?Â Through visual, written, and dramatic exercises she could have learned to express, identify, and manage her fearful feelings with her peers and to build a supportive network. Through creative activities she could have learned that we have options, alternatives to what sometimes seems like hopeless situations. She could have learned about how the media glamorizes alcohol and can negatively influence behavior. She could have dramatically reenacted "fearful" and "tempting" social situations to learn how to respond calmly and appropriately. Through these activities she would have realized how quickly and innocently one may abuse alcohol and drugs, and that she *has the power* of choice to refuse this abuse.

If the young girl had these protective skills to navigate through life's many challenges, her problems might not have escalated to the magnitude that they did. She would have developed the inner resiliency to respond appropriately to whatever problems might have crossed her path. ■

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Chapter 12

Kids Law: A Practical Approach to Juvenile Justice

John W. Biggers

One of the hottest topics in America today is Juvenile Justice. As a nation, we are becoming more aware that almost every aspect of our lives is touched by the legal system as it affects kids.

The killings at public schools by school children have shocked the nation. Who would have expected such behavior in rural, suburban, small-town America, where gangs and drugs are far from the norm? These have not been drive-by shootings in what prosperous Americans refer to as "poor neighborhoods" where gangsters and graffiti abound.

What these tragic events do underscore is that our legal system, especially as it deals with juveniles, is coming to the head of the list of our nation's social ills. Like it or not, law is very much a part of our lives, and we are now confronted more than ever with just how we can understand, interpret and participate in its dramatic challenges. From driver's license requirements, to parking tickets, to taxes, to jury duty, to school codes, to real estate laws, to marriage and divorce, to an automobile accident claim, to a family death, to seeing someone we know face prison, the law touches all of our lives. Sometimes we simply refer to it as THE LAW.

When it comes to the younger members of our family or the community, THE LAW frequently has a major part in their unfolding lives. We are talking now about people under 18, variously referred to as minors, children, juveniles, infants, youth, or as commonly put, KIDS. Many of the families we know, perhaps even our own, have felt the impact of THE LAW as it relates to this growing segment of our society.

As school begins tomorrow, many elementary, middle or junior high, and senior high pupils, in their own "defense," are adding some ominous items to their school gear—distinctive gang clothing, guns, knives, brass knuckles, and beepers. Belonging to a gang is the only "family" security that some of these children and youth have.

Tonight, several thousand kids are sleeping on the streets of the United States—in cities, towns, suburbs, and in rural America. Likewise, tens of thousands of juveniles are living as "emancipated" persons, supposedly free and on their own.

Tomorrow morning in courts across this country, another several thousand boys and girls will be ordered detained in Juvenile Court lock-ups; every bit as secure as jails and prisons for adult criminals. The legal term for these kids who have run up against the law because of their actions is delinquent minors. And another several hundred kids, who are short of their majority by a few months, or even by three or more years, will be transferred by juvenile court judges to the adult criminal justice system because they are deemed beyond dealing with as juveniles.

Many of the minors in the above paragraphs are not actually accused of crimes, in the typical sense, but instead are called status offenders (runaways, homeless, school truants, alcohol and tobacco users and the like) who are "out of control," according to parents, school officials and others who are normally responsible for these children. The legal term for all these kids is incorrigible.

Right this minute another countless group of kids is being neglected and mistreated by adults, in one or more ways; physically, psychologically, verbally, sexually. The legal term for all these minors is abused.

And, of course, scores of children and youth are denied the basic support system of home. They are the ones who make it through their early years "in spite of" and not "because of" the adults responsible for them. The legal term for all these children is dependent or neglected.

Changes and Challenges of Juvenile Justice

Unfortunately, today there are strong and differing opinions about how we should deal with kids within THE LAW, especially those juveniles who have become serious law-breakers. The juvenile justice system, or KIDS LAW, is that part of American justice which works for and with minors—a part of our legal social structures that is almost 100 years old. (Jane Addams is credited with getting the first Juvenile Court started in 1899 in Chicago.)

The serious question that adults and kids themselves must NOW answer is: HOW can we have a system of KIDS LAW that provides positive and practical responses to the many challenges and crises which confront our young people today, at home, in school and in the larger community?

It has been a troubling challenge in the last quarter of a century for the court system to define the rights of kids under the law. The courts have tried to recognize the rights of minors under the U.S. Constitution and all the laws that are governed by it, and at the same time, recognize that minors need special treatment in terms of protections and consequences within the framework of our criminal justice system.

The major shift in directions for kids and the law came in the late 1960's and 1970's, as the U.S. Supreme Court made it clear that kids are not to be hustled through a legal system that deprives them of the basic rights to fairness that are guaranteed by the Constitution. The courts simply would not countenance the idea that minors be locked up, perhaps for years, without any legal protections whatsoever.

And yet, as we enter a difficult period of transition, many people are quick to judge this approach as catering to the whims of kids. Without a recognition or awareness of progress over the past century, this attitude reverts to the position that kids should reap the benefits or consequences of their behavior, and in the end they should have to live with the results of their actions for the rest of their lives.

Now as we approach the centennial of juvenile justice as a part of our legal system, it is time for our nation to transcend antiquated approaches that attempt an illusory balance of dealing with children and youth as either non-persons or as almost-adults.

Facing up to a Genuine Juvenile Justice

If we are to establish a truly democratic and open society, the whole direction of KIDS LAW must combine the best of all our resources to guarantee that every child and youth will reach adulthood without any social baggage. In essence, no child should be condemned for a past that deems him a loser before reaching adulthood.

The law must guarantee that kids are eventually and carefully guided into a world governed by adults. It is the duty of the legal system to make sure that all of us, including kids, understand and appreciate the need for sharing responsibility within the whole community, with fairness and respect for each individual and diverse backgrounds, attitudes, and abilities.

The juvenile justice system, with all its rules and ominous- sounding concepts, will be effective in dealing with the broad spectrum of human problems and productivity if the kids themselves know that the whole process is there as a friendly place.

KIDS LAW does not just descend upon a juvenile and his/her family one day when a catastrophe drops on the kid, whether it be mom and dad separating, getting injured in the street, having trouble at school, or being accused of breaking the criminal law. It starts the day a child is born, when all the people and forces around this boy or girl begin to set a direction for the rest of his/her life.

Although the federal and state governments have taken active roles in juvenile law programs for the past several years, there are two goals that can be dealt with more effectively on the local level: (1) *prevention* of abuse of minors and delinquency by the kids, and (2) *rehabilitation* of kids and families who have been caught up in the system.

In terms of prevention, the community where a minor lives should be able to understand the educational, health, and personal issues that surround the child who has been caught up in the juvenile system. Why is this kid in trouble? The home, school, streets, or wherever the problems arise for kids are the base of operations for helping to avoid the pitfalls of abuse, violence, and abandonment.

These human conditions that bring harm to the members of our society who are least able to protect themselves must have the highest priority of local government and community, as well as social and religious groups. To prevent the kinds of situations that bring about frustration and violence at home and in every corner of the community, there must be a concerted effort of the neighborhood to reach out with programs that meet the needs of children and youth.

These efforts must have both one-on-one and group impact, so that the minor knows that he or she belongs and has a meaningful part to play in the community. Each community, city or town has unique resources that speak to the conditions which confront their own kids. Local leadership can provide the means to hear what the youth are saying and needing.

Taking Kids Law to the Classroom

A Way to Define KIDS LAW for kids and everyone else in their lives

Kids can see from the very start of their lives that rules, order and cooperation show that having "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" requires a balance of rights and responsibilities among the many people who make up their world as it revolves around the playpen, the neighborhood, the day care, and the school yard.

There is a definite need to bring THE LAW to kids in ways that they understand. They must be able to appreciate how the complex legal system impacts their lives at home, in school, and in the community. The classroom, or any other setting in which kids are met on their turf, can be the place where the juvenile justice system is presented in a manner that kids can relate to, in terms of relationships with their peers, their families, and to the vast intricacies of the adult world.

KIDS LAW is nothing more than simply making the law simple so that kids and all persons who are part of their lives can talk the language of law, as well as enabling them to make the right decisions before disaster strikes. Who can they talk to about their questions; what will happen if they engage in certain kinds of conduct; what is their responsibility when it comes to the rough times associated with friends and family?

Now is the time for every school to commit itself, along with community support and involvement, to institute some type of KIDS LAW course, at all three basic levels of education: elementary, middle and high schools.

There must be in the classroom, and enhanced by outside contacts with "the system," a concerted effort to define the diverse and difficult areas of the law as they affect kids every day of their lives. This must be a dialogue between kids and the adults in their lives.

Teachers, counselors, administrators, and support staff must be working in league with attorneys, judges, psychologists, law enforcement and court personnel and others who are on the ,front line of the juvenile justice system to find the resources to take a serious, but fun, look at the law. This "study" should be based upon the concept that the law is a friend of kids.

In the KIDS LAW program in the Amphitheater Public School District of Tucson, Arizona the courses are set for fifth, eighth, and early high school classes, with the social studies programs serving as the background for four to ten sessions. The classroom teachers and other school staff participate in the program, but the materials and basic discussions are provided by the KIDS LAW staff, including an experienced attorney in juvenile law and law students or paralegals.

Student books give the class members a modest amount of reading about the kinds of issues which result in kids being caught up in the law, such as family matters, employment and property issues, school law, dependency, adoption, and of course, behavior of kids that can bring them to Juvenile Court. The books have a course calendar with suggested readings and class activities. Teachers' guides help the class to dig into the more critical issues, and the involvement of local attorneys, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers and others experienced in juvenile law broadens the base of instruction and brings a diversification of ideas and professions to the classroom.

The course is divided into two basic areas of concern which cause kids to be caught up in the law: (1) Things done (and not done) FOR and TO kids by adults; (2) Things done BY kids themselves. The first part confronts issues surrounding basic rights of kids to a safe and proper home and place in the community, including matters of dependency, adoption, marriage and divorce issues. The second part deals with matters arising from juveniles breaking the law, and other issues relating to emancipation, employment, military service, use and ownership of cars and other property, and of course, criminal law.

A special part of the course is to read biographical sketches of famous men and women who had their own problems as kids with juvenile-law related issues, including Babe Ruth, Maya Angelou, Thomas Edison, General Patton, Caesar Chavez, Zora Neale Hurston and others, who are referred to as "He Rose and She Rose."

It is important for the kids, at all three levels, to appreciate the constant balancing of *rights and responsibilities*, and they hear an emphasis upon the need for a firm respect for each other and for the legal system. These are the "three R's" of KIDS LAW.

KIDS LAW is not designed as some sort of "outside, extra-curricular" activity, with an "expert" coming in to make a speech of some sort. Rather, the essential key to success in the whole approach is that the students themselves make an exciting discovery that law is important to them right now. They need to know that they can depend upon this "system" to be there when it is critical in their lives. ÂLikewise, thealize that they, too, play an essential role in making the whole process one that is fair to everyone.

Innovation is the way to go in KIDS LAW. What kinds of learning mechanisms reach a particular group of kids depends upon their own experiences, family settings, a teacher's methods of reaching students, and a particular community's attitudes and capabilities. Role playing, mock jury trials, panel discussions, field trips are used in the four- to ten-session courses.

What it boils down to is that KIDS LAW is taught as a part of everyday life—around the kitchen table, on the ball diamond, riding a bike, dating, buying a hamburger, dealing with a family argument, passing a course, finding a job, and on and on. If students can truly discern this with a KIDS LAW course that relates to the fun of growing up, they will not only like what they hear, but more importantly they will want to play an active and positive part in it.

Conclusion

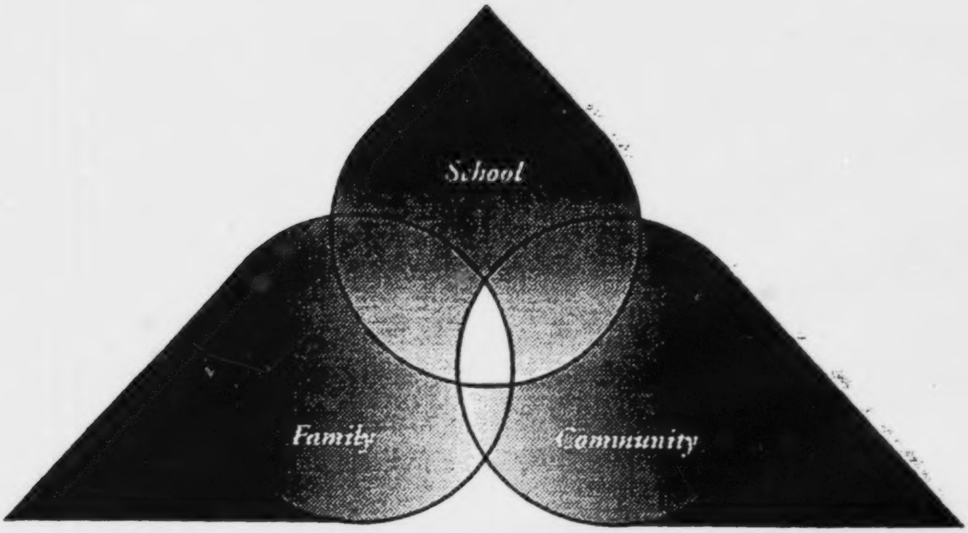
In order to obtain a practical, rather than punitive, approach to justice for kids, the adults who are making and enforcing the laws must understand that minors can be led to make informed and appropriate choices for their lives. When the directions that juveniles take are against the rules this is a signal that the adults in a kid's life, and very possibly society as a whole, have failed to provide the right tools and opportunities for him or her.

KIDS LAW begins at the earliest stages of a child's life. This is when adult responsibility for children starts, and the full energies of our nation must be geared to working with the adults who have brought this new life into our society. The community recognizes that no child should be solely at the mercy of those adults or other situations that are initially and ultimately responsible for his/her well-being. In essence, we are saying that it does "take a village."

Then when tragedies do hit us, such as the schoolyard shootings, or teenage pregnancies, or persistent dropouts from school, instead of feverishly searching for more effective means of just clamping down on kids or locking them up, or treating them as adults, with one or more punitive measures, a committed and concerned nation will find the resources to define and activate a genuine system of KIDS LAW that leads our youth into responsible adulthood. ■

KIDS LAW, by John W. Biggers (expected publication date, Fall 1998)
Gault decision in 1967 (U.S. Supreme Court)
U.S. Census Bureau data
Carnegie Corporation of New York
The American Public Welfare Association
National Foster Parent Association
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the University of Missouri
U.S. Justice Department Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
National Center for Juvenile Justice
The New York Times
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)
National Coalition for the Homeless
U.S. Department of Agriculture Department (Food and Consumer Service)
U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

IV. EMPOWERING YOUTH TO READ AND WRITE


School
Family
Community

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Chapter 13

The Accelerated Reader Program: A Contextualized Evaluation

Martha Webb McGovern, Barbara Romine, Brenda Brinson and Lyn R. Rushing

Although the elementary school involved in this study draws its students from a rural county with a low adult literacy rate (Lewis, 1997), the faculty and staff have high hopes for the students who attend the school. Their aim is to develop strong, independent readers, and one way they are attempting to do so is with implementation of the Accelerated Reader Program. Enthusiasm for the program was high in the initial full year of its use, but we—a cooperative team of two third-grade teachers and two university teacher educators—decided to reserve judgment until we had studied its effects more closely. We were aware that research on the impact of the Accelerated Reader Program was incomplete in the sense (1) that it had been mostly quantitative and decontextualized and (2) that much of that small body of research had been sponsored by the program's distributors (*Advantage*; Mathis, 1996; McKnight, 1992; Peak & Dewalt, 1993; Rosenheck, 1996). We decided that a more complete and valid evaluation of the program for this particular setting would need to rest upon contextualized interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data. To date, we have gathered only partial data, and this article reports the preliminary findings on the relationship between the students' experience of the program and the literacy beliefs implicit in the program.

How the Accelerated Reader Program Works

In the Accelerated Reader Program, students read designated books and earn points by demonstrating comprehension on computerized tests. In general, long and difficult books are worth more points than short and easy books. For book selection, the students' zones of optimum challenge are determined by their scores on S.T.A.R., a computerized achievement test.

At this elementary school, students read their Accelerated Reader books during established periods in the school day, during free time, and at home. Point goals are set at the individual, classroom, and grade levels, and the accumulated points have several uses. First, individuals can exchange points for items at the Accelerated Reader store. Second, the points help the classroom achieve its goal and the prize the class has selected, such as an ice cream party. Third, the points figure into the competition among the grade levels, and fourth, the points may qualify a student for schoolwide competition and the chance to win large, expensive prizes, such as bicycles.

Evidence of the program is visible throughout the school. In classrooms, students take turns at the computer and keep record of their individual progress in notebooks or folders. In each hallway, thematic bulletin boards depict progress toward the classroom goal. For example, basketballs with the names and points of individual students may be flying toward the class goal hoop, or rainforest monkeys may be reaching for their individual goal bananas. In the school cafeteria, a wall-sized football field illustrates the current status of the grade level competition.

What is the Students' Experience With the Program

Knowing that the experience of a program can be very different for the organizers and the participants, we arranged structured interviews with third- and fourth-graders. Late in the Fall Quarter of 1997, 28 third- and fourth-graders were interviewed by 20 Georgia Southern University students who were enrolled in the Teaching of Reading Practicum. The interviews were conducted as one activity in the regular tutoring sessions of the practicum. During Winter Quarter of 1998, one teacher educator of our research team interviewed a second group of 8 third-graders, who represented specific conditions of economic or educational risk. Two of this group were considered at-risk because their families were of low socioeconomic status and their parents were not supportive of the school; two were not considered at-risk because their families had adequate economic resources and their parents were educationally supportive; and four represented mixed-risk conditions because their backgrounds contained either one or the other risk factor.

A Difference in the Amount of Reading and Attitude?

When asked, "Do you think the Accelerated Reader Program has made a difference in how much you read or how you feel about your reading?", 24 of the tutees answered "yes" and 4 answered "no." All 8 of the students in the second group answered "yes." Those who answered "yes," explained that they now like and value reading more, read more, better, and faster, learn more and earn points. Three of those answering "no" indicated that they had read a lot before the program was in effect. The final "no" responder complained of no chance to take the comprehension tests because someone else was always at the computer in the classroom.

Several responses hinted at problematic means-end issues that have been raised by critics of the Accelerated Reader Program (Carter, 1996). For example, one third-grader explained that she was motivated to read by the extrinsic rewards of the program and was uncertain of reading's intrinsic value:

> I usually don't like to read, but I like pizza so I read to earn it. . . . If they discontinue Accelerated Reader, I don't know whether I'd keep reading more. I am improving. I have learned to question myself. I am getting into books that are funny. But not non-fiction because they are so factsy.

Another self-directed reader explained how she had had to become independent of the point system in order to progress as a reader:

> When Accelerated Reader first started, I thought it was all about points, and I read too fast. Now I appreciate the test of my understanding and the feedback. If I get a question wrong, I see how *they* were thinking about the book. Oh, yeah! . . . Mainly, the program is about *understanding a book*. It's like a dream come true to have *time* to read!

What Kind of Thinking is Being Done?

The structured interview also asked the students to describe what their minds were doing (1) as they read a book for the Accelerated Reading Program and (2) as they read a free choice book. In general, the tutees' comments about reading books for the Accelerated Reader Program, indicated that they were trying to understand the book but were largely preoccupied with the mechanics of the program. In this context, "mechanics" refers to the implementation and management aspects of the program, such as points, test scores, or computer availability. Their comments included 29 mentions of program mechanics, 15 mentions of understanding, and 1 mention of enjoyment. Typical reported thoughts were:

> "Am I going to make a 100 or fail the test?"
> "I am thinking of earning points and getting stuff."
> "I'm thinking about moving up a level and getting moved up on the bulletin board."
> "I'm hoping no one is at the computer when I'm done."
> "I am thinking of some questions I believe will be on the test."
> "It's like I have two minds. I am listening to what is happening and I am thinking about what I already read."

In contrast, the tutees' comments about reading free choice books suggested that they were reading for understanding and for enjoyment. Their comments included 16 mentions of understanding the story, 15 of enjoying, and 2 of daydreaming. Only 1 comment related to the utility of reading: "I'm just wasting my time because I can't take a test on it." Typical reported thoughts were:

> "I am reading for fun and to learn more."
> "I think how they talk funny and make things funny with words."
> "I think of questions in my mind."
> "It's cool and I want to read more."
> "It relaxes me. It makes me happy."

What Kind of Thinking is the Program Promoting?

When readers take an efferent stance, they establish an objective relationship with a text and focus on information that they can extract from the text. When readers take an aesthetic stance, they establish a subjective relationship with the text and focus on the experience of reading; that is, on the associations, feelings, and ideas aroused in them by the book. Many (Cox, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tompkins, 1998) recommend use of the aesthetic stance for the initial reading of material, for it is the aesthetic response that arouses curiosity for further inquiry, that identifies purposes for subsequent critical and efferent analysis, and that connects with personal reality for applications of learning.

Comments from the tutees suggest that they were assuming an efferent stance as they read books for the Accelerated Reader Program, and, in contrast, that they were taking an aesthetic stance with their free choice books.

Interviews with the eight children who represented various conditions of risk supported the inferred occurrence of efferent and aesthetic stances. One girl explained that when she is reading a book for the Accelerated Reader Program, she is thinking: "What kinds of questions will they ask me? How many questions will they ask me? Do I need to read the book over again to be ready?" On the other hand, when she is reading a free choice book, she characterizes her thought processes as: "I am reading to learn about stuff that interests me—like health and animals. Sometimes I think I am in the book. I think hard about what I have just read. I imagine myself grown up and doing what I just read about."

Although another student at first said that she reads "almost the same" in the Accelerated Reader and the free choice conditions, her further clarification of the difference revealed a shift in stance. Explaining how she reads a book for the Accelerated Reader Program, she said: "If I don't understand, I search for the answer because it may be important to them and on the test." In contrast, in relation to reading a free choice book, she explained: "If I don't understand, I decide whether it's important enough *to me* to search for the answer. I go into my own world. It's like I'm doing it and in the book myself."

An Emergent Theme: Doing Something with a Book

Another recurrent theme in the interviews with the second group of eight students was their desire to apply or to respond to what they had just read. One girl expressed the desire eloquently:

"Sometimes it seems like I'm reading a book for nothing, but with Accelerated Reader, I feel I'm *doing something* with a book; I take a test. And I feel happy that I read a book really carefully. I earn points for the Accelerated Reader store and help the class reach its goal."

Because the issue of response/application had not been a part of the original structured interview, only six students were questioned about choices of follow-up activities, but all six expressed keen interest in response choices and all six wanted both to take the computerized test *and* to do something with the book in another way. The students suggested such projects as writing a play, acting out a part, doing a book talk, creating a book commercial, or drawing an illustration.

Questions That Arise From Examination of the Students' Experience

As we begin to assess the implementation of the Accelerated Reader Program at this elementary school, the students' experience raises three key questions:

1. Does the students' preoccupation with the mechanics and extrinsic rewards of the program caution us to rethink how reading is being promoted? Does the program send the embedded message that reading needs to be extrinsically motivated because it is not rewarding enough in itself?
2. Do we want to promote students' use of the efferent stance for the initial reading of both narrative and expository material? Is there a way we could promote an aesthetic stance for the first reading and response?
3. Are we asking enough of the students? Would they willingly invest more of themselves in the reading process if we added various response and project choices to the current program?

Conclusions

Our evaluation of the Accelerated Reader Program at this particular school has just begun. At the end of the 1997-98 school year, we will consolidate and analyze quantitative data of students' reading performance and additional qualitative data from observations and interviews with school personnel and parents. This aspect of the study, however, has provided us a window on the students' experience of the program and has alerted us to some informed judgments which must be made.

As is so often the case in education, the question is not a simple one of "Should we implement the Accelerated Reader Program or not?" Instead, it is the more complex one of "How can we implement the Accelerated Reader Program in a way that realizes its full educational potential?" In implementing the program, we need to remain true to the aim of creating a community of strong, self-directed readers who can say, as one student in the study did: "Mainly, the program is about *understanding a book*. It's like a dream come true to have *time* to read!"■

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Chapter 14

Helping At-Risk Parents and Children: The Potential of Family Literacy Projects

Catherine A. Hansman with Johnnie Edge

In 1968, roughly one in eight Americans lived in poverty. Today, one in seven Americans, or nearly fourteen percent of the population of the United States live at or below the poverty level. What does this mean for all Americans? Intransigent poverty has become entrenched in our nation, leading to an ever deepening cycle of crime, lack of education, unemployment and hopelessness (Eisenhower Foundation Reports, 1998).

Often illiteracy, and ultimately poverty, is a vicious cycle in families. In families that face these problems, both parents and children can be considered at-risk. Statistics show that the level of parental education, particularly that of the mother, is a strong factor in predicting the literacy proficiency of children and young adults. Family literacy programs have received attention in recent years because they promise to help break this cycle to the benefit of young people as well as adults (Chisman, 1990). The purpose of this paper is to describe family literacy programs, defining what they are and how they began. An example of a small successful program which helped at-risk children and parents will lead into a discussion focusing on future issues and concerns for planning and implementing family literacy programs.

What are Family Literacy Programs?

Family literacy programs are designed for the hardest-to- reach parents and children. These programs provide communities with programs to address the functional literacy skills of parents and their children and to provide training in a supportive environment. Programs typically are provided through collaborations between different agencies and funded through aggressive efforts by family literacy program planners. As an attractive benefit to boost parental involvement, most programs provide comprehensive child care as a key component so that parents may be in their classes while participating in family literacy activities. Even though parental involvement in these programs consists of between 80-100 percent female parents, parents are referred to in gender neutral language as "first- teachers," "adults," "primary care-givers," and "parents" (Cuban & Hayes, 1996).

Several definitions exist for family literacy programs. Darling and Paul (1994) took a programmatic approach by defining family literacy as a "holistic family-focused approach to teaching reading, targeting at-risk parents and children with educational programs and other services...their program goals call for improving (a) the skills and educational level of undereducated parents, (b) the developmental skills of young children, (c) the parenting skills of parents in support of their children's learning, and (d) the quality of parent-child relationships and interactions" (p. 282).

In contrast to a programmatic view, Maxwell, Morrow and Tracey (1995) defined family literacy as a "complex concept associated with many different beliefs about the relationships between families and the development of literacy" (p. 22). They further maintain that family literacy is composed of both mainstream and non-mainstream families, and that literacy extends beyond school-based literacy activities, and that family literacy activities should reflect the ethnic, racial, and cultural heritage of families.

History of Family Literacy

As an early example of the concept of family literacy programs, Reading is Fundamental (RIF) was formed in 1966 to promote children's reading programs. They developed programs that support parents in their roles as their children's first teachers. RIF clearly sees parents' literacy level and the parent's interest in their children's habitual reading habits as essential to developing children as readers.

The rise of the family in children's literacy development can be found as early as 1970 in such research topics as: the influence of parents on children's oral language development (Bernstein, 1970); studies of parents' book reading habits with young children (Flood, 1977), and studies of early readers (Clark, 1976). Out of this research, several organizations were formed to facilitate the development of various kinds of family literacy programs. Family literacy programs first appeared in the mid 80's as a fundamentally different approach to working with undereducated families. Different from other programs that specifically targeted only children or only adults, family literacy programs are educational intervention designed to reach the whole family (Tett & St. Clair, 1997).

The program Collaborations for Literacy (CFL) was an early successful experiment in developing family literacy programs with both public and private funds. The program ran from 1984 until 1989 and utilized literacy tutors, students from Boston University, through its College Work-Study Program. A community school provided the university access to adult basic education students with children. A branch of the Boston Pubic Library offered tutoring space and its book collection for use by the tutors and the participants in the program. The original tutors were trained by a state affiliate of Literacy Volunteers of America. The program was funded through a variety of sources, including Boston University, the Massachusetts State Department of Education, and local and national foundations.

The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) was formed in Louisville, KY in 1989 and is currently directed by Sharan Darling. This organization trains educators and policy makers throughout the country to design, implement, and evaluate family literacy programs. Darling and Paul (1994) explain that family literacy programs may invigorate the school reform movement through instituting systematic change by prevention, as well as remediation strategies. Her idea suggests that as more and more emphasis is placed on the role of the parent in helping their at- risk children, K-12 educators are coming to realize that there are parents who need a tremendous amount of help themselves.

All these programs would not be possible without legislation that has provided some funding for Family Literacy Programs. Even Start was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1988. It was the first federally funded initiative to be entirely devoted to family literacy. The language of Even Start stipulated that funded programs offer a combination of adult basic education, parenting education, and early childhood education information to its participants (Edge, 1997). Other acts and titles that have initiated family literacy programs are: The Adult Education Act, The Library and Construction Act, the Head Start Act, the Family Support Act of 1988, and Title III, Part B, the Family Partnership Act.

An Example of Family Literacy Programs in Action

A key to the success of family literacy programs is to empower and challenge both at-risk parents and children to read together to improve both their literacy and interpersonal skills. Such programs can challenge adults and children and help to give them choices concerning their futures. Essential to reaching at-risk parents and children through family literacy programs is to develop a means of intervention that is convenient, personalized and non-threatening (Unwin, 1995). With these ideas in mind, a family literacy program was designed and implemented in rural Georgia in the summer of 1996 to encourage at-risk parents and their children to read both at home and in school. The parents were all participating in General Education Development (GED) classes in rural Georgia and receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Most of their children were at-risk students in public school systems who were experiencing either scholastic or social difficulties at their schools.

The teacher of the adults in the GED program planned and developed a small family literacy program. All the women parents who participated in the program were high school drop outs who had never held a job that allowed them to support their children without the aid of AFDC and food stamps. The purpose of the program was to encourage both the mothers and the children to read at home. A secondary purpose was to encourage the mothers and at-risk children to spend more time together. Ten parents and their children volunteered to attend weekly sessions at the local public library; these sessions required parents and children to read together and then collaboratively complete activities related to the books they had read. To encourage the children, rewards, consisting of attractive school supplies, were given to the children at the end of the six week session. In addition, the final session was held in the town library, prizes and certificates were distributed not by the GED teacher but by the school librarian, and the local newspaper printed a story and pictures about both the adult and children participants. Follow-up interviews with parents indicated that the mothers felt a sense of accomplishment from completing the program. What is more important, though, the mothers reported continuing reading with their children at a greater level than they had before. This also led to the mothers becoming more actively involved in their children's academic successes. Perhaps the biggest key to the success of this program, however, was that parents and children were provided transportation to attend the program (Edge, 1997).

Issues with Family Literacy Programs

Although for many low literate adult women family literacy programs are "meaningful first steps inside the adult education systems" (Cuban & Hayes, 1996, p.5), some participants in family literacy programs may be looking for serious educational opportunities for themselves, not just joint educational opportunities for both them and their children. Research concerning some programs indicates that women resent and resist inflexible interventions that may devalue or contradict their personal beliefs in raising their children (DeTemple & Tabors, 1994; Nurss & Singh, 1993; Rodriguez-Brown & Mulhurn, 1993; Zakaluk & Wynes, 1995). This research reflect the need to "build on women's existing practices and the importance of a critical approach that challenges adult students" (Cuban & Hayes, 1996, p. 6).

Tett and St. Clair (1997) propose an alternate approach to family literacy. Like other research has indicated, they believe that family literacy programs "should be culturally productive by supporting and valuing home-based literacy usage in ways which genuinely reflect the lived experiences of children and their families. Only in these types of programmes (sic), we argue, will the values and practices of the home environment affect schooling in ways which are truly responsive to the 'voice' of parents and their cultural values" (p. 109). Tett and St. Clair further argue that the perspective of family literacy programs should recognize the real lives and experiences of families and community members rather than reproducing a "constructed ideal" of what their lives should be.

Little research exists which actually documents the long-term effects of family literacy programs. One beneficial outcome reported by both Eldrige-Hunter (1992) and St. Pierre, Swartz, Murray, Deck, & Nickel (1993) was that the families who participated in family literacy programs had more and newer reading material in their homes following the programs. Having material at home may be helpful in encouraging families to read with their children, but family literacy programs should also help people value their own literacy at home and in their communities while learning the literacy of schools. Only then will learners, both children and adults, begin to increase their confidence in their competence as readers and as learners.

While family literacy programs have been viewed as successful in helping engender more interaction concerning reading and literacy among at-risk youths and their parents, researchers should focus further efforts on discovering the benefits and risks inherent in family literacy programs in order to design more effective programs. In addition, family literacy program planners and instructors should encourage parents to " share their literacy goals, beliefs and experiences" (Cuban & Hayes, 1996, p. 13). This will help them develop a "personal voice and validates them as people, learners and teachers in their families and communities" (p. 13) while giving parents opportunities to create and share their own stories with their children. Listening to the voices of the parents will help planners design more useful programs for participants.

Implications for Practice

Since welfare reform was enacted in 1997, families with children on welfare have a limited amount of time to remain on welfare. Family literacy programs have proven successful in engaging at-risk parents and children together in academic pursuits. They may be helpful in breaking the inter- generational cycle of illiteracy and ultimately poverty. Helping at-risk youths means paying attention to the home environment and to at-risk adults. Home life can shape children's literacy and their attitudes toward education. States that are mandating education and job training for welfare recipients must incorporate supportive, developmental, and preventative services into their education plans. Unwin (1995) maintains that reaching at-risk parents and children is essential to the development of convenient, personalized and non- threatening programs. Therefore, public schools, vocational institutions, universities, and adult literacy centers should develop programs that stress intergenerational learning. Involving adult literacy instructors will be helpful because they know the needs of these parents and to some extent their children.

Family literacy may provide much needed help and support to at-risk parents and their children, and these programs can positively influence literacy and academic skills intergenerationally. Support of governmental agencies and community leaders is essential to developing these programs and to supporting at-risk parents and their children as they read together and "learn to learn" together. This support will, in turn, impact how at-risk families may break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty and take their places in communities. ■

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Chapter 15

A Pocket Full of Poetry: An Unlikely Approach with Middle Schoolers At Risk

Beverly A. McKenna and Valerie A. Cole

When it comes to motivating at-risk middle-level learners to read and write, poetry is perhaps the last approach that comes to mind. Based on our experiences, however, poetry deserves a second look. When defined broadly, poetry can become the basis of a variety of techniques with promise for reaching early adolescents who have been turned off to literacy. In this article, we explore some of these techniques and offer suggestions for integrating them into a middle school language arts classroom.

Poetry, according to Donald Graves (1992), brings sound and sense together in words and lines, ordering them on the page in such a way that both the writer and reader get a different view of life. As students experiment with words, they learn to create images, play with words, and evoke feelings. Poems can tell stories that can make us laugh or cry. In recent years, the definition of poetry has broadened to include songs and raps, riddles and word pictures, along with more traditional genres.

The rules for writing poetry have changed too. Poems no longer have to rhyme. The first letter in each line does not have to be capitalized, and poems can be punctuated in different ways—or contain no punctuation at all! Poems can take different shapes and can be about anything. No poem is a failure. For these reasons, poetry involves few risks and should therefore become an integral part of reading and writing. It is a valuable way for students to express themselves at any grade level.

Discussion and Classroom Contexts

Many students think that they don't like poetry but after hearing poems by Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky, and others, the students discover that poetry can be fun. Teachers may be unsure how to incorporate poetry activities in their daily classroom schedules. It is important for the teacher to have books of poetry available in the classroom and for the teacher to share his or her favorite poems with the class. Students should be encouraged to comment on the poems. In their book, *Using Discussion to Promote Reading Comprehension,* Alvermann, Dillon, and O'Brien (1987) state that "discussion is an integral part of the comprehension process." They believe that recitation and lecture cannot compete with discussion in offering opportunities for students to

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communicate their views to other students. This also places reading in a social context, which is most important to middle school students.

Teaching Students About Poetic Devices

Poets choose words carefully. As Coleridge put it two centuries ago, prose is "words in their best order," but poetry is "the *best* words in their best order." Poets craft powerful images when they use unexpected comparisons, repeat sounds within a line or stanza, imitate sounds, and repeat words and phrases. These techniques are called poetic devices and these along with types of poems should be taught directly to the students.

Some types of poetic devices that should become familiar to students are similes (comparing one thing to another using the words *like* or *as*) and metaphors (implying that one thing is the equivalent of another without using *like* or *as*). In the following lines, for example, Dorothy Aldis compares the trees swaying during a storm to brooms sweeping the sky:

> Brooms
> On stormy days
> When the wind is high
> Tall trees are brooms
> Sweeping the sky.

Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonant sound in consecutive words or in words in close proximity. Students can draw a picture and write one or more sentences to describe their drawing. Patrick, a fifth-grade student who likes to fish, wrote "The fresh fish fell fifty feet." He also illustrated this sentence. *The Z Was Zapped* (Van Allsburg, 1987) is an excellent resource for teaching children about alliteration, as are common tongue-twisters.

Onomatopoeia is a device by which poets use "sound" words to make their writing more sensory and vivid. Students can add sound words to a classroom chart or to a page in their language arts notebooks that can be used when they write their own poems. Comic strips often have sound words such as *crash, bang,* and *boom*. Students should look for these when they read the comics. Many onomatopoeias are more subtle. For example, in saying aloud Keats' phrase "hedge crickets sing," we can almost hear the insects.

Repetition of words and phrases can add structure and interest to poetry. Middle-level learners can look for poems in which lines or phrases are repeated. An extremely engaging practice, especially in the middle grades, is to transcribe the lyrics of popular songs and then display them as photocopies or in transparency form as the songs are played in class. You may think that the students would ignore the lyrics and merely listen, but they actually read attentively as the songs are played. You may use songs as a mini-lesson on poetry, for they invariably rhyme and are structured with repeated refrains. Music is clearly an important element in the daily life of middle-level learners, and it is an excellent source for introducing the notion of repetition and for bringing relevance to the genre of poetry.

Teaching Students About Types of Poems

Students have definite preferences about which poems they like best, but they should be aware of different types of poems. The most popular types for middle school students are limericks and narrative poems. The least popular are haiku and free verse. In a recent study, Kutiper and Wilson (1993) found that the humorous poetry of Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky were the most popular. The three most widely circulated books were *The New Kid on the Block* (Prelutsky, 1984), *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (Silverstein, 1974), and *A Light in the Attic* (Silverstein, 1981). Both authors use rhyme and rhythm effectively and write humorous poems about familiar everyday occurrences that are relevant to the middle-level learner.

Writing List Poems. List poems begin with lists of key words that are combined to complete a pattern, often with unexpected results. To create a list poem, students might brainstorm a list of "feeling" words, a list of verbs, and a list of nouns. Along with these lists should be a list of prepositional phrases that can be used to tell where. They enjoy making many different sentences using this pattern. Another way to compose a list poem is to pick a topic and list words to describe it. Katy, a sixth grade student, composed a list of words after a weekend of skiing. She listed *snowy, slippery, sliding, speeding, freezing* and *fun*. Here is the poem that resulted:

Skiing
Snowy
Slippery
Sliding
Speeding
Freezing
Fun

Definition poems can be included in the list poem category because students describe what a specific topic means to them (e.g., what is friendship? or what is cheating?). These are good topics to use in an advisor/advisee program that has been implemented in middle level education.

Writing Formula Poems. Formula poems appeal to reluctant writers because they rely on the set elements, such as the repetition of key phases. In other words, there is less to write! In one type of formula poem, the author begins each line in the same way. This type of poem makes it easy for nearly every student to be successful. As an example of just how easy they are, consider Kate Greenaway four-line poem. Each begins with the phrase, "Little wind":

Little Wind
Little wind, blow on the hill-top,
Little wind, blow down the plain;
Little wind, blow up the sunshine,
Little wind, blow off the rain.

These poems are also easy to read because they are short and each line begins in the same way.

Another type of formula poem is a color poem in which each line of the poem begins with a color word. Students can work in cooperative groups to make up phrases to go with a particular color. Some of the students with whom we've worked have described yellow as "rain boots," "a street light," "an egg yoke," and "the sunset." These poems can be written with a marker of that particular color and displayed in the classroom.

Five-senses poems are formula poems that are usually five lines long, with one line devoted to each sense. Students should choose a topic and describe it by writing what they see, what they hear, what they feel, what they taste, and what they smell. Katy, a sixth-grade student, wrote that she saw dark clouds, heard the thunder, smelled the fresh air, felt the raindrops, and tasted the cold rain when she used a five-sense poem to describe a storm.

Most students are familiar with acrostic poems. In this interesting kind of formula poem, a key word, such as the student's name, is written vertically and each line begins with that particular letter. This can be used with key words from across the curriculum. It can also be used in a advisor/advisee program, particularly at the beginning of the school year. Students can use it as a way of introducing themselves. This type of poem helps the teacher provide a risk-free environment because students cannot fail.

Writing Concrete Poems. Students create concrete poems (a form of free verse) by using art and the arrangement of words on a page. Some books of concrete poems include *Splish Splash: Poems* (Graham, 1994), *Seeing Things* (Froman, 1974), and *Walking Talking Words* (Sherman, 1980). Middle schoolers enjoy reading this type of poetry, especially those who are poor decoders.

Writing Poems for Two Voices. Another type of free verse is a poem for two voices. The poem is written in two columns and one reader or group of readers reads the first column and another reader or group of readers reads the second column. If both readers or groups read at the same time, the words are printed on the same line. Otherwise, the words are printed on lines by themselves. This type of poem is fun for the students to read aloud. It enhances their confidence level in reading in front of others and gives them the opportunity to practice reading with expression. It is also a good strategy for teachers to incorporate drama and creativity in the classroom. Paul Fleischman's *I Am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices* (1985) is about birds and his Newbery Award-winning *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* (1988) is about insects.

Writing Limericks. A limerick is a five-line poem that uses both rhyme and rhythm.

The first, second, and fifth lines rhyme with each other. The third and fourth lines rhyme with each other. The last line usually contains a funny ending. Here's one by Anthony Euwer:

A diner, while dining at Crewe,
Found quite a large mouse in his stew.
Said the waiter, "Don't shout
And wave it about,
Or the rest will be wanting one too."

Writing Haiku. Haiku is a Japanese syllable-counting poem consisting of 17 syllables arranged in three lines of 5, 7 and 5 syllables. Haiku poems deal with nature and present a clear single image. Some books to share with students include *Black Swan/White Crow* (Lewis, 1995) and *Cricket Songs* (Behn, 1964). The poems and artwork in these books will perhaps change middle schoolers views on haiku.

Tom
My dog is barking
He wants to go out and play
And chase the squirrels.

Writing Tanka. Tanka is also a Japanese verse form, containing 31 syllables arranged in five lines, 5-7-5-7-7. It is similar to haiku, with two additional lines. One book of tanka poetry that students will enjoy is Baron's *The Seasons of Time: Tanka Poetry of Ancient Japan* (1968). This book could be included in a social studies unit. (After all, reading and writing poetry do not have to be confined to a language arts class.)

Writing Cinquains. A cinquain is a five-line poem containing 22 syllables in a 2-4-6-8-2 pattern. A cinquain has a definite formula which is as follows: line one has a one-word subject with two syllables, line two has four syllables describing the subject, line three has six syllables showing action, line four has eight syllables expressing a feeling or an observation about the subject, and line five has two syllables describing or renaming the subject. Each line can have any number of words— only the syllables are counted.

Writing Diamantes. A diamante is a seven-line poem written in the shape of a diamond. It too has a definite formula: line one has one noun, line two has two adjectives to describe that noun, line three has three words with *ing* to tell about the noun, line four has four nouns—two that tell about the noun and two that are opposites—line five has three words with "ing" that tell about the opposite, line six has two adjectives that describe the opposite noun, and line seven has one noun that is the opposite of the first noun. This type of poem encourages students to use nouns and adjectives and it encourages them to think of other ways to describe everyday objects.

Light
Beautiful, bright
Seeing, glistening, refreshing
Light is sometimes blinding
Groping, cautioning, frightening
Evil, insecure
Dark

Ballads are narrative folk songs that were first sung during the Middle Ages. Minstrels or bards would sing the legends or stories, often accompanying themselves on stringed instruments. Ballads are usually very dramatic. Some examples are *Barbara Allan* and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner.* Ballads are usually written in four-line stanzas with an abab rhyme scheme. *Writing Narrative Poetry.* Narrative poems tell a story. One of the most popular is Clement Moore's *A Visit from St. Nicholas*, which is now better known as *The Night Before Christmas.* Another well-known narrative poem is *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Narrative poems generally have fast action and are written in chronological order. They also have many lines that rhyme, making them fun to read.

Making Poetry A Part of Your Teaching

Ann Terry (1974) states, "The enjoyment of poetry can be increased by an enthusiastic adult who reads poetry to children." Her research indicates that middle and high school teachers seldom use poetry in their classes, however, and that enthusiasm for poetry must first be stimulated among teachers themselves. Jean Le Pere (1980) gives us six reasons why teachers should share poetry with their students. Poetry provides enjoyment, poetry provides students with knowledge about concepts such as numbers, colors, and time, and poetry encourages students to appreciate language and expand their vocabulary. Poetry also helps students to identify with people and situations, to understand and accept their feelings. Poetry grants students insights into themselves and others, developing their sensitivity to universal needs and feelings.

Poetry should be introduced to the students in gradual stages. In preparing to teach a particular poetic form, the teacher should learn as much as possible about that type of poetry and gather as many good examples as possible. Displaying a chart describing the form is helpful to the students. Read examples of the poems to the students and let them explain how the poem follows that form. Students may be asked to copy a short poem to use as an example or reminder of the poetic form. The teacher should model respect for poems and poets. Writing and sharing one's writing can be risky for students. Teachers should help take the fear out of sharing one's writing by working to build a trusting environment in the classroom. Students should create a class poem or small group collaboration poem before being asked to write an individual poem following the formula. The writing process should be followed here—prewriting, rough drafts, revising, peer editing, and then sharing their poems.

There are many ways to share poetry with students. You may want to set up a listening center and have the students record their favorite poems. Be sure to have them read the poem aloud several times to get the feel of the words and the rhythm before they record their poem. Students should not be forced to memorize poems. Katy, a twelve-year-old student, said that she really likes poems and that she "remembers" memorizing one but that she forgot what it was called. "Something about which path to take," she said. We wonder how Robert Frost would feel about students memorizing *The Road Not Taken.*

Most students enjoy choral reading. There are several ways to arrange a poem for choral reading. One is for the leader to read each line and have the group repeat it. Another way is for the leader to read the main part, with the group reading the refrain. The teacher may divide the class into two groups and have each group read one part of the poem. Still another way is to start with one student or one group reading the first line or stanza, and add another student or group of students as each line or stanza is read. Almost any poem can be used for choral reading.

Lee Bennet Hopkins (1987) suggests setting up a dead tree or an artificial Christmas tree in the classroom as a "poetree" for students to hang copies of their favorite poems on. Students enjoy role-playing and they may find poems that they can act out. An good example to use is Karla Kuskin's *I Woke up This Morning.* Students may want to put a poem to music. Many songs are written as poems, as we mentioned earlier. This is of particular interest to middle schoolers, and using songs in the classroom can be a useful lesson when teaching reading to reluctant readers and writers. You may need to pay close attention to the lyrics of popular songs to be sure that they are appropriate for the classroom. Lyrics of many songs are excellent sources for teaching vocabulary development at both literal and higher levels of comprehension. Other students may prefer to illustrate their favorite poem either in a drawing, a puppet, a clay figure, or even using photographs.

Students should have a variety of experiences with poetry. They should have opportunities to listen to poems, to read poems themselves, and to share poems. Students lose interest in poetry when they are forced to analyze poems and discuss their meanings. Many new literature-based reading programs have an assortment of good poems. Most are short and easy to read, which encourages reluctant readers. They can often be successful reading a few lines as compared to reading a few pages of text. ■

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Chapter 16

Dear Mr. Henshaw: A Perspective Upon Writing and Risk

Dale Purvis

Beverly Cleary's 1983 novel won the Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. When story begins, second grader Leigh Botts has found a book that he likes very much and, prompted by an assignment from his teacher, attempts to say so in a heartfelt, if imperfectly composed, letter to the author. "Dear Mr. Henshaw," he writes, "My teacher read your book about the dog to our class. It was funny. We licked it" (p. 1).

Confronted by more school projects—a report for Book Week, a unit on letters, an author biography—Leigh writes again to Mr. Henshaw in the third grade and yet again in the fourth and fifth. He gets an eventual, cherished reply, which makes it all worthwhile, even though the letter was "only printed" (p. 3) and he received an A minus on his report "because the teacher said I didn't stand on both feet" (p. 5).

When Leigh is in the sixth grade, he moves to a new town and attends a new school, where everybody likes soccer but he does not, although he is supposed to. Because of his parents' divorce, he confronts these confusing changes in his life without the presence and support of the father he adores. While his mother works long hours to pay the bills, he is often alone, in the mornings before school begins and in the evenings. When his new teacher assigns yet another book report, Leigh writes once more to his favorite author, Boyd Henshaw.

Through these letters and through the entries in the diary that Leigh begins at the suggestion of the beleaguered Mr. Henshaw, who is receiving far too much mail from schoolchildren with projects, Cleary tells Leigh's story. It is a story of a broken family and a child "at risk" when no one notices, understands, or cares—or seems to. It is a story about writing, and how through writing Leigh records and explores his life, learning to understand and to accept.

"A World Grown Grim"

Cleary began to write in the 1950s because she had always wanted to, because she remembered a child's delight in a favorite book, because she believed that children "long for laughter" ("Laughter," p. 555). Her humorous tales of Henry Huggins, Ellen Tibbitts, Ramona Quimby, and Ralph S. Mouse have entertained generations of young readers, who, like Leigh Botts, write regularly and enthusiastically to their favorite author. In the 1970s, however, Cleary noticed a disturbing change in the letters she was receiving:

> More letters were filled with sorrow—parents were divorced, a father had been murdered, children who were alone after school were sad and frightened. One boy asked me to write a book and give it the title [sic], Teacher Help Me. That title haunts me. ("Dear," p. 23).

Reading these letters, and many others like them, Cleary confronted "a world grown grim" ("Laughter," p. 563), the world of unhappy children:

> A boy confesses, "Everyone at school thinks I'm a klutz! [sic] It can really get on your nerves afterwhile." Another child tells me, "My parents are devvorst. My dad is the kind of person who never wants to be around kids." Many children say they remain with their mother, but their pets live with their father. A girl confides," I wish I could sue my parents for malpractice but I know I can't so I just try to forget what they do." A boy refuses to capitalize the name of his school because he doesn't like it. ("Newbery," p. 434)

The isolation, sadness, frustration, and anger of her young readers—what Cleary calls "the dark and lonely side of childhood" ("Newbery," p. 434)—became the subject of Dear Mr. Henshaw. Although her other books were happier, Cleary found this one particularly "satisfying" ("Newbery," p. 437). When it was published, she received more letters: "Mothers struggling to rear sons without help from fathers wrote moving letters of appreciation" ("Newbery," p. 437); teachers "told how valuable the book had been in bringing the children's problems into the open" (""Dear," p. 25); "children said the book made them feel better because it told them they were not alone" ("Dear," p. 25).

"I'm Just a Boy Nobody Pays Much Attention To"

In response to a list of ten questions that he receives from Mr. Henshaw, who has received a similar list from Leigh and is somewhat annoyed about it, the sixth-grader describes himself and his family. He is "just a plain boy" (p. 14), "a boy nobody pays much attention to" (p. 25), "sort of medium" (p. 15), but "not stupid either," though his new school does not think that he is " Gifted and Talented" (p. 15). He has no friends, someone is stealing the good stuff from his school lunch, and his dad "got" his dog, Bandit, in the divorce settlement, when his mom got him. Because he hates being home alone while his mother is working, he leaves for school early and walks backwards so that it will take him a long time to get there. In the evenings, alone again while his mother attends night school, he eats chili from a can and listens to the cars drive into the gas station, where he is forbidden to hang out. When there isn't a lot of traffic, he listens to the ocean, a few blocks away. His father is a trucker who never comes around anymore and seldom calls. When he does, he addresses Leigh as "kid" instead of "son." Leigh thinks about this, lying awake at night in the empty house.

When Leigh begins to write, he begins to understand. But beginning is not easy. He attempts to avoid it by hiding Mr. Henshaw's list from his teacher, but his mother finds the discarded page and insists that he answer all ten questions. By the time he has finished the first two—Who are you? What do you look like?—Leigh has discovered that writing "is hard work" (p. 15). At the end of the third question—What is your family like?—his hand is "worn out from all this writing" (17). Questions 4 and 5—Where do you live? Do you have any pets?— bring on writer's cramp. There are five more questions on Mr. Henshaw's list: Do you like school? Who are your friends? Who is your favorite teacher? What bothers you? What do you wish? When he has finished them all, Leigh is angry: "There, Mr. Henshaw. That's the end of your crummy questions. I hope you are satisfied for making me do all this extra work" (p. 30).

Despite his annoyance, despite his exhaustion and tired hand, Leigh has gotten in the habit of writing. It is easier now, and he has a different attitude about it: "it wasn't so bad when it wasn't for a book report or a report on some country in South America or anything where I had to look things up in the library (p. 31). As Leigh struggles over question after question, finishes them finally, then begins a diary because he wants to and Mr. Henshaw has suggested it, Cleary show how a child learns to write by finding, almost by chance, an appropriate audience and structure for his work. She shows how writing becomes of increasing value to the young writer and how he grows in his ability to record and interpret his own experience.

"I Wrote a True Story"

Although both the fictional Mr. Henshaw and the real Beverly Cleary were stressed by the volume of mail from their young readers—Cleary has estimated that she receives from 75 to 300 letters a day during the school year ("Dear," p. 25)—a letter provides a beginning writer with an audience that is immediate, familiar, and, most importantly, trusted. Teachers, too, may offer a child an encouraging, trusted reader. Britton and his collaborators (1975), who discovered that most student writing is, in fact, addressed to a teacher, explain the significance of a beginning writer's first audience:

> Because writing is a way of committing oneself, and because it is at first a difficult process, young children may rely upon the trusted adult reader in even the simplest piece of work. Later, the fact that this particular adult wants to hear anything you have to say may operate as a strong incentive, and a liberator, so that children who haven't written begin to do so simply because they now feel free to say what really matters. (p. 68)

When Leigh begins to write, he is sustained by the strongly felt presence of Mr. Henshaw, whom he addresses in his letters, whose questions he answers. Within this comfortable, conversational context, he voices a wide range of emotions: he is happy when he reads a book that he likes, he is annoyed when Mr. Henshaw sends him questions, he is madder still when the answers lead him to painful truths. He struggles, however, when he begins his diary. For a diary is not written for another; it is written for oneself. Leigh is not ready to leave behind the trusted, certain friend who has so faithfully listened to his words. So he begins his diary in the only way he can, by addressing "Mr. Pretend Henshaw," even as he begins to consider the changed form of his composition: "I guess I don't have to sign my name to a diary letter the way I sign a real letter that I would mail" (p. 40).

Both the letter and the diary have their own conventions, which Leigh learns through constant practice, but both are also familiar, expressive forms—nonthreatening, simple, and clear—that do not get in the way during the hard, tiring work of composing. Because these structures make few demands of the writer, because the writer is left free to explore "immediate preoccupations," the "mood of the moment" (Britton, p. 82), Leigh learns to record the world about him with clarity and honesty, with an engaging, committed voice—his own.

Chadwick (1987) points out that Mr. Henshaw's list of questions provides another appropriate structure for the beginning writer, who moves from recording his life to considering it:

> These questions move from the very specific and concrete to the general. This arrangement accomplishes several things. First, it allows Leigh to proceed from factual answers to answers requiring more abstract thought. Moreover, Leigh's answers can proceed from what he has already written, helping him to articulate what would have been very difficult if he had not first answered the simpler questions. (p. 143)

By the time Leigh has finished his answers to the ten questions, and writes again to Mr. Henshaw to complain about them, then writes once more to apologize for being out of sorts, he has realized that he is not angry about having to write. He is angry about other things. He knows that what bothers him is not having any friends at his new school. He knows that what he wishes is to spend some time with his Dad. As he continues to write in his diary, Leigh comes to other realizations: that he wants his parents to get back together, that he fears the divorce was his fault, that he blames his father for his unhappiness. After he quits scowling all the time and talks with one of the other boys at his school, he discovers that "it helps to have a friend" (p. 110). He crosses out "Mr. Pretend Henshaw" at the top of his page, because "I have learned to say what I think on a piece of paper" (p. 31).

He is accustomed to writing now: it is part of his routine, his teacher has told him that his writing skills are improving, he acknowledges that he feels better when he writes. So he begins a story. He runs into immediate difficulty, however, for this new form demands yet another structure.

His first effort "The Great Lunchbag Mystery" remains unfinished because he doesn't know who has been stealing his lunch. "The Ten Foot Waxman" isn't going well either. It is about his father: once a large, important presence in his life, uncertain now and diminishing—a man of wax who melts a little every day. But he can't finish this story either. A desperate appeal to Mr. Henshaw, who is still his best audience, brings a postcard and some advice about plot, which Leigh mulls over:

> A character in a story should solve a problem in some way. I can see that a wax man who melts until he's a puddle wouldn't be there to solve anything and melting isn't the sort of change you mean. I suppose somebody could turn up on the last page and make candles out of him. That would change him all right, but that is not the ending I want. (p. 91)

In his letters to Mr. Henshaw and in his diary, Leigh has found the stories that he wants to tell. But he struggles with an unfamiliar form, one that demands resolution of conflict. Although he cannot write the endings to his stories, he confronts the problems in his own life with honesty and courage, accepting the fact that his parents will never reconcile and his melting Dad isn't going to be around much anymore.

The piece that he writes for the Young Author's Contest is titled "A Day on Dad's Rig." It is not an "imaginary story" but a " true" one (p. 123). Though Leigh does not yet know the term, it is an essay, a personal reflection, requiring no pesky plot that must be resolved. He writes it down as he remembers it, selecting the details that he likes best: "I put in about the hawks on the telephone wires and about that high peak where Black Bart's lookout used to watch for travelers coming through the pass so he could signal to Black Bart to rob them. . . ." (p. 109). Recognizing that he is writing now for another audience, one that demands a certain consideration, he omits the waitresses and video games. He wins honorable mention in the contest and is called an "author" by the "real live author" (p. 119) who comes to lunch. Although Leigh is surprised that Angela Badger notices and remembers his story, Plieger (1991) points out that he is learning that "good literature is constructed from what the author knows and understands" (p. 159).

Beverly Cleary, who has been asked for advice by generations of children who want to write stories just like hers, shows us the development of a young author. Leigh Botts begins to write, almost by chance, in simple forms to trusted adult readers. It is a faltering beginning, but the right one. As Leigh commits himself to his writing, as he continues to record the world about him in his letters to Mr. Henshaw and in his diary, he grows in skill and understanding of the craft of writing. And through writing he learns, understands, and accepts. ■

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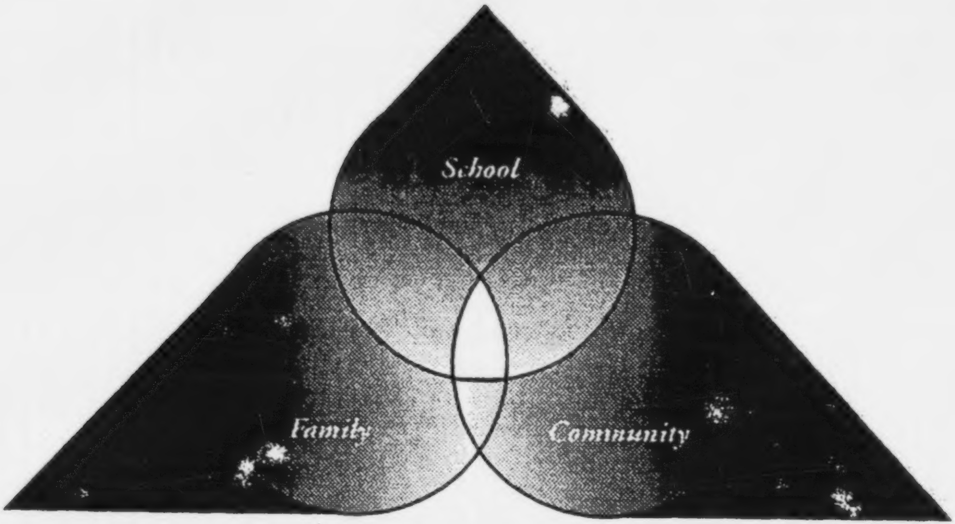
V. EMPOWERING YOUTH WITH POST-SECONDARY READINESS PROGRAMS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Chapter 17

Prep-It-Up! Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program

Era B. Hall, B. E. Powell, Marsha Anderson,
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The admission requirements for the 34 colleges and universities in the University System of Georgia were increased in 1995 by the Georgia Board of Regents. The new standards become effective for the Fall Semester, 2001. These changes were designed to insure that entering students would be better prepared for success in post-secondary education.

History of PREP

Increasing admission requirements for colleges and universities could have a devastating effect on enrollments if high school students do not properly prepare themselves. Students, especially those from families from which no one has ever attended college, might also consider the new standards an increased barrier for even considering college. Others, such as students in at-risk situations, might not stay in high school or may not attempt to take needed college preparatory courses.

A task force was appointed by the Chancellor of the University System to make recommendations about these concerns. Through its report, dated January 1996, the Post-secondary Readiness Enrichment Program, PREP, was established. There are three major aspects of the PREP initiative. First, a publicity campaign was designed to alert all middle school students of the new expectations. This activity involved letters to middle grade students, posters and other information for counselors, and a video. Secondly, college/university visitation days were planned to allow all middle school students to become familiar with a nearby campus. Students would have an opportunity to see one of their post-secondary options, to learn about entrance requirements, and to receive information about financial aid. The final activity was help for students in at-risk situations; such students might not stay in school, or, if they do, might not acquire the competencies needed to be successful. It is this third aspect of PREP that will be discussed in the remainder of this paper.

In February 1996, guidelines for a pilot program to be held in June 1996, for seventh grade students in at-risk situations were issued. This request for proposals indicated that partnerships among the colleges and universities, technical institutes, middle schools, businesses, and community groups should be formed. Eighteen proposals were submitted. Four of these proposals were funded. The pilot projects (as well as the ensuing academic year and summer programs) were supported by state money and private foundations. An Office of Precollege Programs was also established. Dr. Jacqueline Michael was named Director of the Precollege Programs.

In the spring of 1996, guidelines for the complete program, academic year interventions for 1,200 students in at-risk situations and summer programs for 200 students who had participated in the academic year, were released. Although the guidelines indicated ten proposals would be funded, the task force decided to combine nearby institutions into sites consisting of two, three, or four units. Thus, in October 1996, 24 colleges and universities at nine sites began PREP activities. By March 1998 (the middle of the second year of PREP), 25 colleges and universities, 20 technical institutes, 155 middle schools, and 200 businesses and community groups were actively participating in the PREP initiative.

Support from a private foundation was obtained early in 1997 to add a volunteer/community service component to the summer and academic readiness activities associated with PREP. As the participants improved themselves through the interventions, they were to give something back to society.

The Pilot Projects

Pilot projects were held in June 1996 at Atlanta Metropolitan College, Floyd College, State University of West Georgia, and Valdosta State College. At each site, 100 students who had completed the seventh grade during the 1995-1996 school year were invited to participate; these students would be members of the first high school graduating class in the year 2001 and would be the first students impacted by the increased admission requirements. The programs lasted for 10 days, operating as a day camp. Each site had its own program to promote academic readiness, to build self-esteem, to explain the new standards, and to provide recreation. For example, at the State University of West Georgia, the pilot program was Project STARRR, named after its emphasis on Science, Technology, Art, and the 3R's (Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic).

The Academic Year Program

Guidelines from the Office of Precollege Programs suggest the following components for interventions for students in at- risk situations during the academic year: tutoring, homework assistance, and/or mentoring; academic enrichment; cultural enrichment; recreation; developing leadership; using technology; providing goal setting assistance; promoting parental and/or community enrichment; and, beginning in June 1997, volunteer/community service. Some sites, where there are high percentages of students in at-risk situations, allow all seventh graders to participate; other sites enroll specific students in the program.

Activities can be during regular school hours, after school, or on Saturdays. Education majors have been used to help deliver these services. Some sites use standard curricula or commercial programs (such as AVID, Inc.) to help the participating students. Other sites provide interventions as requested by the principals, counselors, and teachers at the participating schools. Students participating in the program are invited to continue in the PREP activities until the year 2001. Information about the participants is being maintained in a computer data base for registration and assessment.

At Georgia Southern University, PREP activities in some middle schools are linked with the 3 O'clock Program, which provides assistance to students after regular school hours. In other schools which do not have formal after school programs, an intervention known as "Study Buddies" has been used. These tutors work under the supervision of a class room teacher to help students master skills taught by the teacher or make up assignments missed by the students. At some schools, where university students could not be provided, partnerships with high school organizations were formed; academically talented high school students were used as tutors in these middle schools.

Another PREP academic enrichment activity is the use of college or university faculty to share their expertise with the middle schools. At Georgia Southern University, a list of interested faculty was compiled for a program known as "Adopt-A- Prof." Teachers in the participating middle schools then invited these professors to give presentations in their classes, to lead field trips, or to serve as contacts for students working on special projects.

Another enrichment activity is a Saturday program. An example of a Saturday program is Georgia Southern University's quarterly activities: "PEP It UP," 'Hoop It Up," and "Batters Up with PREP." Students, parents, and other family members learn of academic matters (admission requirements, scholarships, and other PREP activities), tour the campus, and see a sports event.

The Summer Program

The PREP summer program is patterned after the pilot projects. Each site provides activities for 200 new students who have just completed the seventh grade (as well as students from previous summers) for at least 10 days. Some sites combine the PREP activities with other programs to provide longer programs. At least one overnight activity is held; some sites, such as Albany State University, have more than one overnight experience. Those colleges or universities having residence halls, used those facilities for the participants. Other colleges or universities used gymnasium or large rooms to house the students on sleeping bags.

The summer programs provide various academic enrichment activities, many of which involve hands-on experiences. Technology, especially usage of computers, is emphasized. Field trips to industries and technical institutes are frequently taken. Recreation is built into the schedule. Participants are encouraged to demonstrate leadership skills. Opportunities to learn of other cultures and historical periods are provided. For example, in Project STARRR at the State University of West Georgia, the students participate in Spanish classes, study aborigine art, hear of the life and times of a Civil War soldier, learn of the daily life of an early settler of the area, and visit a reconstructed home site of the late 1800's. The participants of the summer program respond positively to this curriculum. They often become better students during the school year, exhibit greater self-esteem, and aspire to higher goals for themselves.

Volunteer/Community Service

By participating in volunteer/community service, it was anticipated that PREP students and their mentors would gain a feeling of pride and commitment to their community as well as a sense of social responsibility. In addition, these service activities could be used to publicize the entire PREP program to generate more support. Likewise, the participating middle and high school PREP students would become positive role models for other youth.

Giving back to the community by PREP students is somewhat ironical because students in at-risk situations are often thought of as not having anything to offer or being unwilling to do anything for society. Many PREP students live in impoverished conditions; often there is only a single parent in these households. Some live in isolated communities which are geographically isolated and sparsely populated; others live in urban housing projects. The educational level of the parents or guardians of many PREP students is less than the state average. The only guidelines from the Office of Precollege Programs are that the volunteer/community service activities should meet the needs of the local area and will provide opportunities for PREP participants to help community groups, colleges, and businesses/organizations that supported the PREP initiative.

Each of the nine PREP sites developed its own, distinctive activities, beginning with the summer programs in 1997. In PREP Site 8, for example, workshops led by middle school counselors were held to develop county service opportunities. Students were involved in brainstorming, planning, and implementing the activities, although the PREP coordinator had the power to reject any project that seemed inappropriate or unsafe. The participants were also given instruction about behavior and other guidelines. Two projects suggested by the students at Waycross Middle School were the raising of $800 through car washes for the Empty Stocking Fund and the participation in the March of Dimes Walk-A-Thon. Another activity involved students from Ware, Brantley, Chariton, Pierce, and Appling Counties as they used facilities at the YMCA for their summer PREP program; they raised money to send five underprivileged students to a YMCA summer camp. Community service projects were also integrated into the middle school curriculum, as was done at Waycross Middle School, which selected a local nursing home for study. In math classes, the statistics of the residents were analyzed; in health classes, diseases of the elderly were studied; and in English classes, letters were written to the senior citizens.

At PREP Site 6, a project, "Plan, Plant, Grow, and Harvest a Community Garden," was chosen for the six counties in rural south Georgia (Ben Hill, Berrien, Colquitt, Irwin, Tift, and Turner) in the service area of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. This vegetable gardening activity involved collaboration with personnel from the

University System of Georgia Coastal Plains Experiment Station to provide workshops, local Future Farmers of America chapters at various schools, local agriculture supply companies who provided donations of seeds and fertilizer, retired farmers, and members of the Agriculture Club at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. School principals felt that the gardens should be located on the school campuses for easy access. The land was cleared, and seeds planted in the spring. Then the students pulled weeds, watered the plants, and eliminated harmful insects. The students harvested the vegetables in the summer and donated food to food banks and nursing homes. In this project, the PREP students learned much about agriculture, applied skills already mastered in schools, and demonstrated that they can help others.

Conclusions

PREP is helping thousands of students in at-risk situations to stay in school and to prepare themselves for post-secondary options: the world of work or additional education at a technical institute, college, or university. For example, standardized test scores improved at one middle school, after tutoring and homework assistance was provided to several students with at-risk problems. Many individuals have become more academically motivated. For instance, a pilot project participant who was previously an average student is now making all A's. Additionally, the PREP activities encourage students to improve their self-esteem, broaden their cultural awareness, develop leadership skills, and help others. For example, a once shy summer participant in the eighth grade is now the president of the PREP club at his high school. The summer camp activities provide opportunities in which the lives of the participants are positively changed. The student evaluations of the summer programs are generally positive. Representative of other responses, one student wrote, "I now know I can be somebody, and I will be somebody."

The programs for the middle schools students will continue in their existing format until the fall semester, 2001. Programs for high schools are now being developed with PREP clubs as one of their featured activities. In high schools, more emphasis will be placed on learning about careers, post-secondary education opportunities, and preparing for standardized tests, such as the SAT or ACT.

While the state funded PREP programs are supposed to end in the year 2001, many regional coordinators hope that local institutions will be able to continue these school and college preparatory activities for our children in the future. ■

Chapter 18

2001 and Beyond: A Mentoring Program to Improve Access to Post-Secondary Education

Carol A. Hoffman and Daniel B. Ross

The announcement earlier this year of President Clinton's proposed program titled "High Hopes for College" has highlighted increasing national concern about access to higher education for first-generation applicants. As educators and social service practitioners have faced this issue, the focus of their efforts to prepare young men and women for college and post-secondary training has shifted from the high school grades to middle school and even elementary-level programs.

This paper will describe a model mentoring project initiated in Lorain County, Ohio to reach students as early as seventh grade and sustain their preparation for post-secondary education through middle school and high school. The intended outcome is to increase the proportion of students who complete high school and matriculate at the post-secondary level within two years of their graduation.

The project, named *2001 and Beyond* by its first participants, is one of several service elements provided for students in the Avon Lake, Ohio Public Schools. The project involves a three-way partnership linking corporate, non-profit and education communities in an effort to achieve shared goals. It was designed to be replicable in school districts—particularly the sixteen located in Lorain County—with very disparate characteristics, including urban and rural populations, ethnic homogeneity and diversity, and dissimilar income distributions. For this reason, most of the project's facets are designed to be flexible.

The partners creating and supporting the project are: (1) The Access Program, a non-profit organization founded in 1991 to address countywide issues relating to educational attainment; (2) the Geon Company, a manufacturer of vinyl compounds and Lorain County's only Fortune 500 corporation; and (3) the Avon Lake Schools. Since the project began three years ago, Cleveland's Eaton Corporation, a multi-national producer of electronics and heavy-duty automotive equipment, has joined the partnership, and the Ohio General Assembly has funded the first replication effort.

The Basis for the Project's Design

In order to create a model which, when replicated, actually would increase the number of Lorain County students continuing their education at the post-secondary level, it was important to address both the supply side of the economic environment—specifically, the qualities of future workers—and the demand side—or the needs of local employers. At the time the project was initiated, Jobs for the Future had not yet completed its study of workforce preparedness for the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Kazis & Kopp, 1997). Yet when that study's results were published last year, the findings confirmed that the skills mismatch evident in Lorain County also prevailed across the United States. Moreover, the researchers' observations were consistent with the Lorain County project's fundamentals. These include the following:

- Modest interventions are likely to have modest and short-lived impacts on people's lives and their ability to succeed in the labor market.
- Second-class systems (i.e., programs with low standards for achievement) yield second-class results.
- Work is a powerful motivator and catalyst for learning and effort when provided in a supportive, learning-rich context.
- A strong, direct connection to, and understanding of the local labor market and its employers [are] critical.
- Work preparation strategies must take into account the developmental needs of young people and provide activities and services that address those needs.
- Strong relationships with competent, caring adults are essential.
- The impact of program design on different population subgroups [varies] greatly, with males tending to benefit less than females from past efforts.
- Quality of implementation matters greatly.
- It takes time for results to appear. (Kazis & Kopp, 1997, p. 6-7)

The Supply Side

With these principles in mind, the partners designed the project to link caring adults who were actively engaged in rewarding careers with 7th-grade students not likely to continue their education through or beyond high school. In Avon Lake, a moderately affluent and ethically homogeneous (White European) Cleveland suburb where roughly seventy-five percent of each high school class is college bound, the district's strategic plan addressed the need to serve those who, for any reason, were not preparing for higher education (Avon Lake Board of Education, 1995). The Oberlin, Ohio School District, where the first replication is underway, however, is very different demographically. There, more than one in four residents lives below the poverty level. Oberlin also embraces a large African-American population (24%) that spreads across all income levels, but, as in most communities, is represented disproportionately below the median (US Bureau of the Census, 1990). Owing to the presence of a highly selective liberal arts college (Oberlin College), most residents, regardless of income or ethnicity, recognize education as a key element in social mobility. Yet income-related obstacles remain a deterrent for many students to continue their education.

As mentioned earlier, the model project now being implemented in these two districts is longitudinal, with each student's participation spanning grades 7 through 12. The volunteer mentors in both the model and the replication conduct monthly activities carefully planned, not only to encourage participating students to plan for post-secondary education, but also to stimulate them to explore a wide range of career opportunities and the preparatory paths to them. Each student identifies his/her areas of interest and researches related career and education opportunities through on-line and printed sources, field trips, and, in the high school years, through internships for which academic credit is awarded. Through these efforts, students guide themselves toward fields they find exciting–and sometimes eliminate those they find less appealing than they had anticipated.

The Demand Side

The mentoring project operates from the perspective of the participants' personal strengths and interests, rather than emphasizing the anticipated composition of the future local workforce. Nevertheless, the involvement of employees as mentors, the research and worksite field trips and the local internships for high school students allow business and industry to communicate the qualities they seek in employee candidates, and allow students to consider these qualifications as they develop their plans.

This is important because, while the influx of corporations from Cleveland has brought Lorain County new positions in health care, management information systems, and business, along with badly needed tax revenue to support improvements in curricula and facilities, the employment market has been characterized by a lack qualified local applicants. The new positions, thus, often are awarded to individuals residing outside the county, while local young people are consigned to unsteady, low-wage jobs. With this dramatic disjuncture between supply and demand, developing local talent is critical.

Because of the preponderance of manufacturing jobs in the county, several of the mentoring activities demonstrate the value of post-secondary technical training as a possible alternative to Baccalaureate programs, and discourage the frequent misconception that factory work requires no preparation and is appropriate only for low achievers. For those interested in college, engineering opportunities are highlighted, and a residential summer program to be added in 2000 will emphasize opportunities for students interested in math and science. Other program elements focus on the arts, humanities and social sciences and the local opportunities associated with them.

How the Project Works

Guiding Concepts

The foundation of *2001 and Beyond* lies in several concepts that have been incorporated into the implementation plan. These are:

1. *2001 and Beyond* is a program for "advantaged" students—that is, it emphasizes students' and families' strengths, rather than their deficiencies. Participants are selected randomly by computer from cross sections of their classes to ensure that none of the

participant groups is homogeneous with regard to family income limitations, inferior academic performance or any other perceived deficiency.

While the cross sections are weighted with students nominated because their teachers or counselors believe they would be more likely to enter post-secondary education as a result of the mentoring experience, the reasons for the nominations are very diverse. As a result, students who are selected by the computer usually feel they have won a lottery, rather than that they have been invited to participate because of their shortcomings. This *does* mean that part of the effort is directed to students who are not the most in need of assistance, but the investment in avoiding self-labeling has proven to be a critical element in the program's success.

2. The longitudinal character of the project allows time for a lasting impact to develop. Students enter the *2001 and Beyond* project in the 7th grade. Ages and stages studies show that there is still enough "magical" thinking at this level to enable students to believe that anything is possible. Seventh graders are flexible, open to new ideas, and generally more willing to be guided than students only two or three years ahead of them. (Seligman, Weinstock, and Heflin, 1991, p. 172; Ilfeld, 1996, p. 34) The middle school start also allows time for students to understand the relationship of the core high school curriculum to post-secondary opportunities before they must select their high school courses.

All project activities are age-appropriate. Middle school activities are conducted mostly in small groups of five students and two mentors. Field trips, however, include all of the district's participants from a single grade level. When the students move into high school, the activities gradually become more individualized and emphasize the development of clear, but flexible, personal plans for post-secondary education or training.

3. The project requires the involvement of each participant's parent(s) or guardian(s). Participation in *2001 and Beyond* is strictly optional on the part of the student. Somewhat surprisingly, only one student selected to participate thus far has turned down the invitation. Even more surprising is that when parents have been told that they must agree to participate in order for their children to participate, they have accepted the invitation just as eagerly. In some cases, especially in single-parent families and/or where shift work is involved, it has been logistically impossible for the parents to attend the sessions designed for them. When this occurs, the parent or guardian is asked to identify a committed parent substitute who consistently will represent the family on the student's behalf.

Staffing for the project includes not only the mentoring coordinator who recruits and trains the mentors and arranges the activities, but also a parent liaison, who coordinates communication with parents. This staff member encourages parents to attend the sessions designed for them and meets with each family once a semester at the home or at the school to discuss the participant's progress and to solicit the parents' and the student's input regarding program design and revision. The parents thus serve as an integral part of a team consisting of school staff, the project staff and the volunteer mentors, all of whom work together to encourage the participating student.

4. The project stimulates pro-activity on the part of students, parents and mentors. A critical element in the program design is increasing reliance on students and mentors to plan and implement the activities. At the middle school level, the planning occurs in small groups, often with each group designing one aspect of a future meeting. In high school, the small group gives way to more individual planning based on an ongoing assessment of interests and strengths. Parents' ideas are solicited regularly and incorporated wherever possible. Parents also are encouraged to speak formally and informally with funders, relaying their feedback directly.

5. *2001 and Beyond* is a community-based activity. The combined resources of the school district, the partner corporations and The Access Program have allowed the project to develop with ownership by the broader community. A recent presentation for community leaders held at Geon's corporate headquarters was introduced enthusiastically by Avon Lake's mayor, who is kept apprised of the program's progress on a regular basis. The event catalyzed the development of a small business consortium to expand The Access Program's scholarship fund for local students. Additionally, the high level of community support and involvement has attracted funding from outside the county.

6. The model program includes an independent professional evaluation. The full impact of *2001 and Beyond* will be known only after its participants have left high school and the proportion who enter post-secondary education can be compared with that of non-participants. In fact, the most appropriate measure may not be available until a few years after each class graduates, because not all students who continue their education will do so immediately.

At present, participants' progress is evaluated annually by Albert F. Porterfield, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology at Oberlin College. Dr. Porterfield uses both quantitative and qualitative methods, including an instrument designed specifically for this purpose. He measures the program's impact on its participants in comparison to students in their classes who are "like them" with regard to a number of variables. To ensure objectivity and confidentially, the evaluator is given an identifying number for each participant and for each member of the comparison group, rather than their names.

Results of the independent evaluation after two years showed participating students pulling ahead of the comparison group on several quantitative variables, but not at a rate that was statistically significant. Third year results are eagerly anticipated in hope that these trends will be more striking.

Qualitatively, parents, mentors, participants and school staff have reported dramatic attitudinal and behavioral changes on the part of some students, with more moderate progress on the part of most others. A minority of five students has shown little or no advancement in terms of planning for post-secondary education and are reported to be mildly disruptive. Students will discuss this issue in their small groups at the start of the school year.

Content of Activities

As participants proceed through middle school and high school, the partners work together to explore careers and educational opportunities through:

- Quiet dialogue with mentors
- Visits to business/industry
- Visits to 2-year and 4-year colleges
- Visits to vocational and tech schools
- Residential summer programs at colleges and universities
- Classroom scheduling and career planning
- SAT/ACT preparation
- Personal budget planning
- Financial aid advice
- Hands-on internship experience in the worksite

The partnership agreement provides students a new school- based support group to serve as team members with school staff and parents/guardians focusing on their future welfare. Every year's activities are initiated at each school with a kickoff dinner for participating students, parents and mentors. A motivational speaker is usually a key feature. In the spring, activities conclude with a family/mentor picnic planned and administered by the students. One student/mentor activity is conducted each July to sustain the relationships during the summer break. Occasionally parents attend evening sessions concurrent with, but separate from, student sessions. These discussion meetings focus on the developmental characteristics and needs of middle school and high school students and on various aspects of planning for and encouraging post-secondary education. Parent field trips include the students and mentors as well. The parent liaison maintains regular contact with each family to ensure active participation in the parent sessions.

The Plan for Replication

The first replication of the partnership project was initiated in the spring of 1998 in the Oberlin Schools. Four additional districts, two large and two small, are targeted for the project's replication by 2002. The next replication is planned for the City of Lorain, beginning in the 1998-99 school year. The program elements will be modified for presentation as classroom units to allow a much larger number of students to participate, as is appropriate for an urban district (The Access Program, 1998, p. 12).

Like Oberlin, the City of Lorain is ethnically and economically diverse. With a population of approximately 70,000 (compared with Oberlin's 8,000), however, the city's school district is much larger. The mentoring program will serve two schools located in South Lorain, where the poverty rate is 22.6%. Income levels in South Lorain are almost universally low, and, as in Oberlin, minorities are represented disproportionately among its low-income families. Over thirty-one percent of South

Lorain's residents are Latino, either Black or White, and 12% are African-American. Of these, 31.8% and 59.9%, respectively, live in poverty. The poverty rate among non-Latino Caucasians in South Lorain is 28.4%. (Lorain County, Ohio, Office of Planning and Development, 1997)

By Lorain County standards, South Lorain's Whittier Middle School, with a student body of 560 in grades seven and eight, and Southview High School, with 1,418 students, are large schools, with few students planning to enter post-secondary education. Therefore, a program intensively reaching a small group of students could make only a minimal impact on the community as a whole. Adapting the model program to reach all Whittier and Southview students in classroom units will meet the needs of a district with an exceptionally large ratio of students not bound for post-secondary education.

The adapted version also is intended to provide data which, when compared with those from Avon Lake and Oberlin, may indicate how intensive the mentoring contact must be in order for the project to reach its objectives.

Conclusion

The *2001 and Beyond* mentoring project initiated through the collaboration of The Access Program, the Geon Company and the Avon Lake Schools represents an attempt to influence the level of educational attainment in one Northern Ohio county. Because of the project's longitudinal nature, it will be several years before its success can be measured accurately. In spite of this, however, there have been many indications that linking students not bound for post-secondary education with caring adults in the workforce has begun to make a difference.

As mentioned earlier, quantitative measures do not yet suggest statistically significant change. Qualitatively, however, there does appear to be a documentable impact. Observers have noticed a marked increase in the participants' enthusiasm for program activities and a higher level of their involvement in program planning. Mentors report that shy or withdrawn students manifest growing confidence, and those who are easily distracted are becoming more focused. Students who are interested in technical careers discuss their goals with pride, no longer self-conscious about having chosen educational paths different from those of their college-bound peers. For the most part, students trust the mentors who have supported and encouraged them for the last three years, and they express themselves more articulately to adults in general. Perhaps most important, many, if not all, of the participants now see themselves as capable of entering and completing post-secondary education or technical training. They are beginning to accept the academic and economic challenges they must meet in order to succeed, and, with support from their parents/guardians and mentors, most express a willingness to try to persevere in the face of obstacles.

The students are not the only participants affected by the project. The mentors, who were recruited originally for only two years' service, are now committed to remaining involved with the students through high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment. They coach the students in planning and implementing the activities, they voluntarily attend student performances and athletic events, celebrate birthdays and holidays, and are available for students to contact them for nearly any reason. One mentor comments:

I think [the students'] ability to function in group settings and to productively contribute has been greatly aided by this program. I also think they have developed better self- images and have higher levels of confidence in themselves and what they are capable of accomplishing.

Parents are becoming increasingly familiar with the steps to post-secondary education. The parent sessions and the semi- annual meetings with the parent liaison have heightened their sensitivity to their sons' and daughters' interests and, in some cases, have encouraged more attention to their children's academic performance. One mother described the project's impact on her son by explaining to the funders:

No one in either of our families has attended college, so our son had no reason to expect that opportunity would be there for him. When he entered the program in the 7th grade, he made no references to continuing his education after high school. In the 8th grade, he began to say, "If I go to college, I will . . . ." Now, in the 9th grade, he says, "*When* I go to college . . . ."

Future years' activities will introduce the participants in the mentoring program to the culture and experience of the workplace by providing opportunities for them to earn high school credit through worksite-based internships. Continued visits to college campuses and to technical training programs will allow students to de-mystify further the post-secondary experience, leading, it is hoped, to a feeling of familiarity and acceptance in areas once thought to be off limits or beyond reach.

Continued evaluation will measure the students' movement toward and into post-secondary education and suggest explanations about what kinds of students benefit from the mentoring experience and how intensive the program must be to achieve the desired results. The authors look forward to reporting these outcomes as they become apparent. ■

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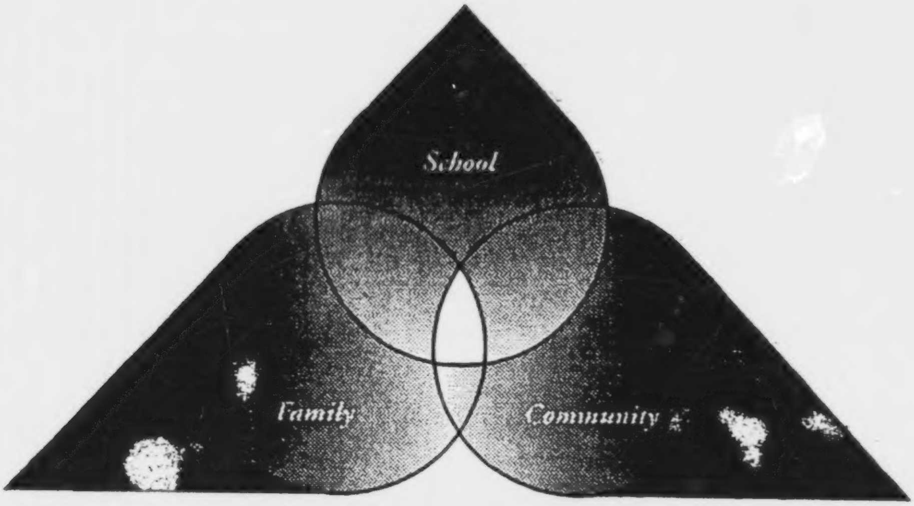
VI. EMPOWERING YOUTH WITH ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS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Chapter 19

Partnerships for Success: Building on Youths' Strengths

Paul R. Olson and Jeff Shubert

Isaiah is a 14 year old you are working with who is on probation for stealing a car. He is also having problems at school. He is missing class and has been suspended. Your frustrations are running high because he has missed the last two appointments with you and although he is finally sitting in front of you, his participation today is very minimal. The answers to your questions consist of one word replies and he is avoiding all questions about his problems at school and at home. He does not see them as problems. He has agreed to do things differently in the future but he also reports that he is still getting in trouble. He is not implementing the suggestions you have made. He has said repeatedly that the only reason he is working with you is so he can get off probation.

Does this scenario sound familiar? As care providers, we are given the difficult task of getting kids to change their problem behaviors. However, many individuals find that they get a lot of "resistance" from the youths and families that they serve. This paper will discuss an approach toward working with youths that reduces resistance, encourages involvement and promotes ownership on their part. This model was developed as part of a Boys Town* program to work with juvenile offenders and their families. Because of their probation, these juveniles are required to participate in this model program. Most of them are initially reluctant to receive services. Our goal is to get them involved in treatment, use the skills we teach them, and voluntarily make changes to correct the problems they are facing. To accomplish these goals and to overcome the resistance we encounter, we found that we needed to develop a partnership with the young people we serve.

Historical Approach Toward Treatment

The typical approach to working with juveniles has several limitations associated with it. The first limitation with the traditional approach is that it relies on a thorough problem-centered assessment. This involves identifying the juveniles' problems or areas where the case worker thinks problems exist. Then the traditional approach typically identifies what they are doing to create these problems, and the worker tells them what to do to fix these problems. A typical assessment might be

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summarized like this: "You have a problem respecting authority figures. You need to be respectful toward adults and stop arguing."

This approach is similar to the medical model where doctors diagnose the problem and prescribe a "fix." However, this approach tends to create resistance and defiance from many juveniles. Additionally, many of them deny that treatment issues are a problem. If they do not participate in their treatment, they get very little out of it because they do not see how it will benefit them. This problem-centered approach does not involve *youths'* perspectives or opinions in the process. As a result, we see a high number of incidents of resistance in the form of missed or canceled appointments, refusal to implement suggestions, and denial of problems.

Developing Partnerships

To combat denial, defiance and resistance, we must get youths involved in their treatments. The most effective way to do this is by forming partnerships with them. There are two key elements to this approach: identifying youths' agendas, and identifying and building on their strengths.

Identifying Youths' Agendas

The first way we develop partnerships with youths is by identifying their agendas. Boys Town defines agendas as the problems that are causing the most stress or the most pain in these young peoples' lives (Peterson, Kohrt, Shadoin, & Authier, 1995). These problems are youths' perceptions of what needs to be fixed. Their agendas reflect the main problems that they want to resolve. Some examples of youths' agendas might include, "I don't like being on probation," "My parents are always nagging at me," "I don't have any freedom," or "I want a job." We have found that if youths define their agenda, they will be more motivated to work with us and will not deny their problems because they have told us about them. By working on their agendas, we are creating a partnership with youth to work on issues deemed most important to them.

Youths' agendas may differ greatly from referral agencies' agendas. For example, lets go back to Isaiah, the 14-year old who has been referred for services due to car theft. The referring agency's agenda revolves around the car theft but Isaiah does not see that as his main problem. His agenda is that he does not have a job. With two different agendas, which one should be addressed first? As long as Isaiah is not in imminent danger or creating a threat to others, we will work on his agenda before we address the referral agenda.

There are several benefits to taking this approach. Unlike the traditional approach to treatment, youths' perspectives and opinions are solicited and validated. This, in turn, enables us to develop strong partnerships with these young people because we incorporate them in the change process. Youths are not merely recipients of the services that we think they need but active participants who are working on problems that are relevant to them. Additionally, instead of us "force-feeding" treatment to them, the treatment becomes something they are interested and involved in because it relates to their issues, not ours. Therefore, they are more likely to take ownership of their problems.

Dealing with the youths' agendas does not mean we forget referral agencies' agendas. These are very serious issues that must be addressed. However, by focusing on the youths' agendas first, we establish a partnership that motivates youths to work with us on referral issues later. We have found that when they experience a sense of success by resolving their agenda issues, they are more likely to trust the worker and be open to work on other issues.

Identify and Build on Youths' Strengths

The second key element to forming solid partnerships with youths is to identify and build on their strengths. The process of identifying and building on strengths incorporates the following four key steps: (1) assess problems maintaining the agenda; (2) determine skills needed by youths; (3) identify strength behaviors; and (4) choose skills to teach based on strengths.

1. Assess Problems Maintaining the Agenda

Before we can build on strengths we must understand the problems. We must thoroughly assess what the youth is doing to cause the problem or problems within his or her agenda. First, we assess which *behaviors* are contributing to the problems within the agenda. We ask ourselves: "What is the youth doing to maintain the problem?" For example, Isaiah's agenda, or the problem he wanted to work on, was that he did not have a job. We need to assess what he is doing to create or maintain this problem. In Isaiah's case, he is submitting incomplete applications, and wearing tank tops and excessively sagging shorts to the job interviews. In addition, he is making negative statements during these job interviews.

The assessment process is a cognitive process. We do this analysis in our heads and do not verbalize any perceived problems to the youths. If we were to verbalize these problems at the beginning of our intervention, we would risk damaging our relationship with them. Staying focused on what they do well rather than on what they do wrong will do more to build the relationship and keep motivation high.

2. Determine Skills Needed by Youths

The next step is to determine what skills youths need to solve the problems within their agendas. We assess areas where these young people have skill deficits and then determine which skills can help them reach their goals. We make a list of all the skills they might need to address the agenda issues. For example, we can say that Isaiah needs the skills of dressing appropriately, filling out an application, interviewing for a job, choosing appropriate words in conversation, as well as job finding strategies. We select these skills because they will help Isaiah address the problems within his agenda and help him reach his goal of getting a job.

3. Identify Strength Behaviors

After the list of skills needed by the youths is completed, we do a strength assessment. When doing the strength assessment we look for their *strength behaviors.* Boys Town defines a strength behavior as a behavior that a youth already possesses and uses with some degree of competency (Peterson et al., 1995). We can identify these young peoples strength behaviors in many ways. First, we observe their behaviors and identify what they are doing correctly within the agenda issues. For example, we observe Isaiah using the phone book and newspaper as a resource for job openings as well as calling businesses to see if they are hiring. We also know that Isaiah is very enthusiastic when introducing himself and that he frequently points out his best qualities to people. These are Isaiah's strength behaviors.

The second way to assess strength behaviors is by assessing strengths in other areas that may or may not deal directly with the agenda issue. For example, in court, Isaiah can refrain from making inappropriate comments. This behavior is a potential strength that could be applied to Isaiah's agenda. If he is able to refrain from making these comments in court, he may be able to refrain during a job interview.

Another method to identify strengths is to find out what they have done correctly in the past to deal with their problems. For example, "What did Isaiah do to get his last job?" By looking at past successes we can get an idea of what are some of their strengths. Finally, we seek input from them as to what strength behaviors they think they possess. Once we have identified their strength behaviors, we praise them every time we see them engage in these behaviors, and we encourage them to do more of this. Praising and encouraging increases the likelihood of continued utilization of these strength behaviors.

4. Choose Skills Teach Based on Strengths

The final step in the process of identifying strengths is to choose which skills to teach youths. This decision is based on where they have the most strengths. In other words, the skill where Isaiah has the most strength behaviors is the skill we will teach Isaiah first. For example, Isaiah has the most strength *behaviors* under the skill of interviewing for a job. According to Dowd and Tierney (1992) the skill of interviewing for a job is made up of six behaviors:

1. Dress neatly and appropriately for the job.
2. Introduce yourself enthusiastically to the interviewer.
3. Answer all questions honestly and calmly.
4. Emphasize your strengths, as well as what you would still need to learn.
5. Ask any questions you have about the job at the conclusion of the interview.
6. Thank the person for his or her time. (p. 248)

Isaiah has strengths in three of the six behaviors that make up this skill. He introduces himself enthusiastically (#2), can point out is his best qualities (#4) and is not afraid to ask questions (#5). Since Isaiah has the most strength behaviors under the skill of interviewing for a job, we will teach him this skill first. For example, we had decided that Isaiah could also benefit from the skill of dressing appropriately. The behaviors for this skill are (Dowd & Tierney, 1992):

1. Think about what situations and activities you will engage in that day.
2. Choose clothing that suits the season.
3. Match colors and styles.
4. Do not wear clothing that is too revealing or associated with gang activities.
5. Care for your clothing throughout the day. Do not cut tear or write on clothing. (p. 144)

As we can see, of these behaviors, none are strength behaviors for Isaiah. Therefore, as a starting point it will be easier and take less time for us to teach Isaiah the skill of interviewing for a job, which is one of his strength behaviors.

Conclusion

Workers who use this approach to build partnerships with youths will discover many benefits. First, by starting with youths' agendas, partnerships are formed in which we agree to teach them skills that address the issues that are pertinent to them. This gets them involved in the treatment and open to change. Secondly, by starting with *their* strengths, we establish a solid relationship that is based on praise and encouragement instead of criticism. They then become less resistant and more trusting. When addressing referral issues, they will be more apt to participate and see their roles in "fixing" the problems. Finally, we have found that the decrease in resistance, openness to change, and involvement in treatment associated with this approach usually lead to a decrease in the length of service. Less time is spent trying to convince these young people that problems exist and more time is spent on learning skills that they can use for many years to come. ■

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Chapter 20

Juvenile Reparations Program

Talandra F. Schrock

The Juvenile Reparations Program (JRP) is the "last chance" to avoid incarceration for 16-18 year old chronic juvenile offenders. This alternative program, offered by the Center for Community Justice (CCT), gives juvenile offenders a chance to repair the damage that they have done to their victims. Since its inception in the late 1980s, JRP has assisted juveniles in looking at themselves, the crimes that they committed, and in making things right with all who were affected. Statistics from Fiscal Year 1996-1997 indicate that 37 offenders were served in JRP. There were 69 victims involved in the program, who received a total of $4157 in restitution. JRP clients completed a total of 541 hours of volunteer work. The success rate of program completion was 62%.

Introduction to the Center for Community Justice

The CCJ is a community corrections agency, which utilizes the philosophy of restorative justice in the operation of four programs: the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP), Community Service Restitution Program (CSRP), Victim Impact Panel (VIP), and the Juvenile Reparations Program (JRP). Each of these programs functions in connection with the criminal justice system in Elkhart County, Indiana and are often used as alternatives to incarceration. In June 1997, the Board of Directors adopted the following Restorative Justice Correctional Philosophy by resolution:

> The Center for Community Justice, since its inception in 1984, has followed a nontraditional philosophy of restorative justice. Restorative justice principles aim to make things right. Corrections traditionally have followed a philosophy of retributive justice, with the aim to punish. By designing our services according to the principles of restorative justice, CCJ aims to strengthen community safety, provide support and compensation for victims, aid in the restoration of offenders, and promote reconciliation among victims, offenders, and the community. CCJ sees its services as complementing, not exclusive of, the criminal justice system.
>
> The Center's overall vision is that restorative justice can equitably address the heavy human and financial costs of crime in our county and state. Restorative justice makes right the injuries caused by crimes to victim, community, as well as offender.

> Whenever possible, it is more constructive for offenders and victims to be directly involved in the sanctions and solutions than to simply have them imposed by an outside authority. The Center believes that strong community involvement is necessary to generate and test lasting solutions.
>
> CCJ is committed to working with the criminal justice system and the community at large in promoting public attitudes and policies, which reflect the vision, purpose and end results of restorative justice.

Programs Offered by the Center for Community Justice

The Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) is the oldest of the programs offered at CCJ and is the oldest continually operating program of its kind in North America. In VORP, victims and offenders of crimes—both adults and juveniles- -are brought together in a mediation setting. During the mediation, offenders discuss specifically what happened in their crimes. Victims are given the opportunity to discuss how they were affected by the crimes. A successful mediation results in the negotiation of a *contract for restitution*, which is signed by both victims and offenders. Caseworkers in VORP then monitor the completion of restitution.

Elkhart County, as well as other surrounding counties utilize the Community Service Restitution Program (CSRP). In CSRP, crime offenders are assigned an amount of hours for community service by their probation officers or the courts. Caseworkers in this program collaborate with various not for profit government agencies to provide work sites throughout the community. The offenders have the opportunity to choose their own work sites. The completion of these hours is monitored by the caseworkers.

The Victim Impact Panel (VIP) is another program offered by the Center for Community Justice. Offenders that have committed offenses involving driving under the influence of alcohol are court ordered to attend the VIP. The panel consists of volunteers who have been victims or offenders in alcohol related traffic offenses. Members of the panel tell stories of their experiences with alcohol.

The Juvenile Reparations Program

The fourth program offered by CCJ, and the main focus of this article, is the Juvenile Reparations Program (JRP). Clients in this program have committed offenses that would be felonies in the adult system. Because of their extensive involvement in the Juvenile Justice System, JRP is seen as a "last chance" to avoid a commitment to a Department of Corrections facility. Some of the clients that participate in JRP are facing waivers into the adult system.

The Role of JRP in the Juvenile Justice System

The role of the juvenile justice system in Elkhart County is to rehabilitate offenders, so that they do not continue patterns of criminal behavior. It focuses on linking juveniles to their community to find support and learn ways to avoid criminal activity. The goal is also to assist juveniles in identifying informal supports from their communities in hopes that they will have the desire to become productive members. JRP fits into this scheme by offering offenders the opportunity to develop contracts to make things right with the victims of their crimes, the community, and themselves.

One way in which JRP links clients to the community is the Community Reparations Panel. Members of the Community Reparations Panel serve on a volunteer basis. Clients of JRP present their *contract for reparation* to the panel for approval. Panel members are members of the community that are not professionals in the criminal justice system. The goal of the panel is to represent a portion of the community that is generally not heard. Through informal conversations, the panel discusses each plan for reparation with the respective clients. Questions are asked to determine the appropriateness of each plan. The clients' roles in this process are to present their contracts to the panel and give definition to their plans for reparation by answering questions regarding their plans.

In JRP, clients are asked to develop their own way of making things right with all who were affected by their crimes. Because JRP clients are required to develop their own plan for reparation, they do not enter the program with a list of court orders to which they must comply. JRP clients are challenged to not only set long term goals for themselves, but also to define weekly steps on their way to accomplishing these goals. Clients are given ownership and credibility to define their goals as "specifically" as they can. Clients are also challenged by the fact that they give themselves "consequences" if they fail to follow through on weekly goals.

Referral Process

The process in which clients become involved in JRP is quite simple. Referrals to JRP are generated by the Juvenile Magistrate, Juvenile Court Prosecutor, and Juvenile Probation. When referrals are received, a letter is sent to each prospective client along with a brochure briefly describing JRP. Clients are asked to contact the JRP caseworkers to indicate whether they are interested in the program or not. If clients are interested in participating in JRP, meetings are scheduled to discuss details of the program. The clients are then given 24 hours to contact JRP staff to state their interest in participating in the program. If they are interested in participating in JRP, they are placed on Total Homebound (House Arrest) and given two weeks to prove their appropriateness for the program. After two weeks, clients discuss with caseworkers the positives and negatives of their performances. Clients are then formally accepted or rejected from the program. The development of the JRP *contract for reparations* is the next phase of the program.

Developing a JRP Contract for Reparation

The development of the *contract for reparations* is a very important part of JRP. Caseworkers and clients enter intense discussions about each component of the contract: *victim*, *community*, and *self*. The JRP caseworkers ask the clients to take an in depth look at their crimes and themselves. Clients are asked to create their contracts based on what is necessary to make each situation right to restore the victims, the communities, and themselves.

In discussing the *victim component*, client are asked a series of questions such as: "Have you ever been victimized by a crime?""How did that make you feel?" "What happened in the crime that you committed?""Who are the victims?""How could the victims in your crime play a role in you making things right with them?" Clients then outline their plans to make things right with their victims. This generally involves written apologies to the victims, as well as face to face interactions through mediation.

The next component of the contract is the *community component*. It is often difficult for clients to grasp how their crimes, or crime in general, affected the community. The clients are asked to define their communities and what community means to them. Through an exercise involving clients drawing their communities and identifying the different parts of the communities that are affected by their crimes, clients become aware that crimes does affect their communities more broadly than they realize. Most often clients choose volunteer work to make things right with the communities. Clients must also develop and state reasons for choosing volunteer work, the amount of hours they choose to complete, and the agency for which they are volunteering.

Finally, the clients are asked to look at themselves. In the *self component* of the contract, clients set goals to improve their life situations, which challenges them to address their problem behaviors. Goals included in this component frequently consist of attending school, maintaining or obtaining employment, obtaining treatment for addictions or other forms of treatment, and learning to save or budget their money.

It is important to remember that as each client is different, each *contract for reparation* is different. JRP functions to allow clients to be successful based on their own abilities and individuality.

When clients complete the development of their contracts, they present them to the Community Reparations Panel. If the panel approves the contracts, they are submitted to the Juvenile Magistrate for approval. Once the Juvenile Magistrate approves them, they become court ordered sanctions for the clients' offenses.

Completing the JRP Contract

Clients begin to set weekly goals towards the completion of their contracts. Clients also have a 7 pm curfew and begin to earn free time, which allows them to earn a later curfew for the weekend. Free time earned is based on clients' completion of weekly goals. If clients fail to complete weekly goals, they are asked to give themselves "consequences." The purpose of these consequences is to motivate clients to complete their goals.

While clients participate in JRP, other issues may arise. These issues may include living arrangements, addictions, and issues involving clients' families. Finding solutions for these issues becomes part of the clients' weekly goals while they work to complete their contracts. JRP addresses these issues because the program goal is to assist clients in handling situations that arise in everyday adult life.

Once the contracts are complete, clients appear before the Community Reparations

Panel to tell all that they have done. If the panel approves a release of the clients from the program, reports indicating clients' successes are submitted to the Juvenile Magistrate requesting that the clients be released from JRP and Juvenile Probation. It should be noted that while clients participate in JRP, they have open cases with Juvenile Probation, although they do not meet with Probation Officers.

A Concluding Lesson

The following is a story of a JRP client. The name of the client in this story is fictitious. However, the events are real. Jason was court ordered to participate on JRP after an arrest for possession of cocaine. He entered JRP expecting to simply be compliant and complete the program. What Jason failed to realize was that JRP demanded more than just simple compliance. Jason developed his JRP Contract for Reparation, but failed to acknowledge the fact that he would need to face the challenging goal of completing the contract, as well as avoiding drugs. His plan for reparation included paying $1400 in restitution to the victim of his crime, who was his mother. Jason had stolen the money to buy drugs.

During his time in JRP, Jason had two positive drug screens. Because of this, Jason spent some time in the Elkhart County Juvenile Detention Center. Jason also reluctantly entered treatment for his addictions. JRP staff continued to work with Jason. Soon after his incarceration, Jason became aware that he could be in control of his life. He then began to work towards the completion of his contract.

Jason had developed quite a challenging contract. He maintained employment so that he could complete restitution to his victim. Jason also set the goal of graduating with his class. Expulsion from school had left him a semester behind. Jason attended night school to make up for the semester that he missed. This was in addition to attending classes during the day and working.

Jason successfully completed his contract in 10 months. He is now living a drug free life after successfully completing treatment for his addictions. ■

Chapter 21

Learning From An Alternative School With Diverse Demographics

Marilyn Salafsky

The Regional Learning Center is an alternative education program for young people, age 16 to 21, who have left high school before completing graduation requirements. The program, beginning in 1986 as a pilot project for high school dropouts, has been primarily funded by the Illinois State Board of Education. In addition, the program receives federal funding for disadvantaged youth, as determined by income guidelines and/or disability eligibility, through the Job Training Partnership Act. Federal funding also makes possible summer school programs for qualified youth ages 14 to 16. The alternative education program is free to students and all necessary materials are supplied without charge.

Program Participants and Referrals—Who We Serve

The Regional Learning Center serves over 250 students each year at two program sites, Rockford and Belvedere, Illinois. These students are retrieved dropouts who represent diverse group according to various social and economic indicators. The program participants come from thirteen different school districts, some urban and some rural, as well as private schools in the area. Participants may voluntarily apply to the program or be court ordered to apply and attend. A unique aspect of the program is that almost anyone may attend the alternative school, at either site.

Any young person, 16 to 21 years of age, who has dropped out of school, been expelled, suspended, chronically truant, court ordered to be in school/training program, experienced social problems, or had difficulty in a previous school, is welcome at the Regional Learning Center. Referrals to the program come from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), probation, parole, the courts, Public Health Departments, and Public Assistance offices, counseling and residential treatment centers, as well as other community and social service agencies. In addition, the program receives referrals from area high schools for students who have been expelled or suspended, or are in trouble.

Many teen mothers are referred to the program through the Teen Parents Services program in Illinois. This relatively new program works with teen mothers, 18 or younger, on public aid or receiving any public assistance, who did not complete high school or obtain a GED. The teen mothers are required to enroll in a school or training program so that they graduate high school or successfully complete the GED. If the young mothers choose not to return to school, a portion of their public assistance check will be taken away. As a result of these referrals, nearly 30% of our student population are teen mothers.

A majority of students are referred to the school by word of mouth. The word is "on the street," we are told, that this is a school that can meet students' needs, where students learn and achieve, and where students feel comfortable and wanted. Students' friends, siblings, relatives, and parents/families of former students regularly make referrals to the program at both school sites. It is not unusual to have two and three siblings in one family attend the school, over a period of years, and eventually receive a GED or diploma. For example, in our smaller, semi-rural storefront site in Belvedere, the fifth sibling in a Hispanic family to attend the school and graduate with a GED just successfully completed the GED. This small town has an increasing Hispanic population, and for the past five or more years the school has had a forty percent or higher Hispanic population, many of whom are siblings of previous school attendees and graduates.

The School Context

The education program has two separate school sites, very different in size and in the communities that they represent. The larger school is located in Rockford, Illinois, a city of 200,000, if the surrounding areas are counted, and a very typical city, according to the U. S. Census. Belvedere, the smaller semi-rural community, has a rapidly growing population of almost 20,000. In most categories, Rockford is a highly representative mid-sized American city.

The high school dropout rate in the two counties, Boone and Winnebago, is nearly twenty-six percent, close to the national average. Three districts in the two county area served by the alternative school report graduation rates from 67.2%–72.8% (well below 81.6% state average). Statistically, the area crime rate is high, with the per capita homicide rate exceeding the national average, as well as the city and county average for the state, for the past few years. In 1996, Rockford, and Winnebago County, had a per capita homicide rate that surpassed Chicago's Cook County. Most of the area's crimes and homicides are drug and gang related.

The Rockford school is located in a spacious, former vocational school, near a large high school. This leased site serves up to one hundred students at one time, with the majority enrolled in diploma classes, earning credits, on a semester by semester basis. In addition to the diploma classes, there is an academic skill building component which is open entry, open exit, serving twenty five to thirty students. This component allows students to prepare for the GED.

The smaller storefront site is located in Belvedere, about fifteen miles from Rockford, and is currently situated in a vacant, older elementary school that is near the small town's center. This school serves twenty five to thirty students at one time and has an academic skill building focus, with students concentrating on raising their basic skills in reading, writing, and math in order to pass the GED tests. What is significant is that both program sites are off site locations, not connected or housed in any operative school.

Program Design and Staff

The dominant educational philosophy of the alternative program is to build on the skills that the students already have (Brubacher, Case, Reagan, 1994; Smith, 1982). In addition, respect is key, respect for self, for others, for the program, staff and for learning. Small class size and the school staff are essential to the program's operation and success (Barth, 1991; Meier, 1995; National education goals report: Building a nation of learners, 1995).

At intake, each student is tested in Math, English, and Reading, and a Learning Styles Inventory is also administered. The Learning Styles inventory has proved to be useful in verifying what staff already observed, that many students were kinesthetic, hands-on learners. As a result, many of the staff's teaching strategies are responsive to this approach. For example, in math class, students may walk around the building and measure different types of geometric angles, and use containers in class to get first hand knowledge of the metric weights involved. In Language Arts, students may perform in short plays, reading their own creative work.

The average class has no more than fifteen students to one teacher. There is an emphasis on self-directed, individualized learning, with computer assisted learning available in a few classes. Students work at their own pace. Group activities also frequently occur in the classroom, as well as in the larger school. These include guest speakers and occasional field trips to the local theater, historical museum, botanical gardens, and area businesses.

A sense of concern for the students is evident in many of the planned and spontaneous activities that occur at the school to celebrate birthdays, holidays, new babies, passage of the GED, graduation, and other significant events in students' lives. For example, on Thanksgiving, it is an annual event for teachers and staff to conduct a large Thanksgiving feast for the students and staff, with potluck food items which are brought to the school. Some students have commented that this is their first Thanksgiving meal, or that they would not have had a celebration if the school had not hosted one.

School teachers and staff are fundamental to the program. According to what many students say teachers are caring and willing to get to know students and listen (Noddings, 1984). All teachers are certified in their subject area, some with masters degrees. Many teachers are taking graduate classes on their own. Staff development is an ongoing process with frequent sessions meeting at least two times a month.

Life skills classes and parenting class curriculum and focus A full-time social worker on staff (MSW, LCSW) serves as community liaison. The social worker coordinates and develops the curriculum for Life skills classes utilizing community experts as guest speakers. She also conducts weekly parenting classes for parents (mothers and fathers) enrolled in the program. Both individual and group counseling is available, as needed, with referrals made to appropriate community social service agencies.

In addition to the regular academic core classes of English, Social Studies, Math, Science, Business Education, and various electives such as World Cultures, Keyboarding, each student is enrolled in Life Skills classes. These classes, an essential part of the academic core curriculum, are conducted on a variety of topics including, conflict resolution, peer mediation, violence prevention, nutrition, hygiene, immunizations, decision-making, budgeting, health issues, and other relevant topics.

Health issues are often taught by Public Health Department educators from the two county health agencies and update the students and staff with the most current information on such topics as sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, drug and alcohol issues, emotional and physical abuse, eating disorders.

Since a high percentage of students are living on their own (27%) it was deemed important for students to also have courses in consumer awareness. Topics relevant to students include the following: renting an apartment, checking and savings accounts at banks, buying a used car, credit, grocery shopping, budgeting, and other relevant topics.

The school social worker conducts weekly parenting classes for those students who are pregnant and/or parents. Most are young mothers with several children. These classes cover such topics as, health and safety issues for the mothers and their children, childhood infectious diseases, how to select a safe day care, legal issues such as custody and visitation rights, child care, child immunizations, and other relevant topics. Community guest speakers include local pediatricians, a family law attorney, infectious disease physician. Twice a year the student/parents bring their children to a morning party with refreshments and a chance to socially interact with others and their children.

Valuable Community Connections

In large part, the students' and educational program's success is due to the valuable community connections, the informal and formal partnerships that exist with the program and the various social service and community agencies, as well as the legal and business partnerships. Many of the representatives of these agencies also serve on the school's combined community council that meets several times a year. In addition, the social service and community agencies provide ongoing staff development on a variety of topics. Students benefit from these connections in the presentations that community agency personnel provide for the students, as a regular part of our academic, Life Skills, Parenting Class curricula.

Summary–What We Are Learning

What we are learning from the program comes largely from our students, what they have to say, and what the demographics of our student population teaches us. By paying close attention to program demographics, on a regular basis, we are in tune to the perceived and real needs and wants of our students (Smith, 1982).

We currently, for the past few years, serve more young women than men. This appears to be because we are attracting more students who are young parents, mostly mothers (although we also have a few fathers enrolled in the program). These young mothers are receiving public assistance and have been mandated by the state to return to school or risk losing part of their assistance money.

Initially, some of the young mothers were somewhat reluctant to return to school and resisted efforts to enroll them. However, when they finally do enter school again, most are successful, find that they like being back in an alternative school, and that they can achieve, they can succeed. Some former students like the program so much that they continue to periodically drop in, often with their children, to see staff and say hello.

Our probation/parole population continues to grow. In FY 97 nearly thirty percent of our student population was on current probation or parole status and entered the school as a result of receiving court orders to be there. These students were given the choice of enrolling in school or being incarcerated. Most choose to attend school again.

We are often asked if there is any difference between students who are court-ordered to be in school and those who voluntarily choose to attend the school program. Initially, the young adults who come to the school as a result of court decisions often present as reluctant and unwilling to enter school again. However, these students with legal mandates often quickly adapt to the alternative school and do well, also. Consequently, we have found no significant differences between the students who attend the school as a result of court decisions and those who access the program voluntarily. In fact, the court-ordered students usually buy into the program after a few weeks and often decide that they wish to turn their lives around, and they do.

In summary, reaching students who are young parents, on public aid, living on one's own, transitioning back to society from prison, on parole, and with a variety of social, health, and economic issues/problems requires a partnership of the school with the wider community and the rich resources that reside in the community (Kozol, 1992). It is this strong, ongoing partnership with these community agencies that ensures that students' needs are being addressed and met. Without these linkages, the diverse needs of our students cannot be met. We are learning as the program progresses, learning from our students. There is a continuing need for alternative, smaller educational programs such as the one described here. Students view these programs as a second chance, a last chance. And often it is. ■

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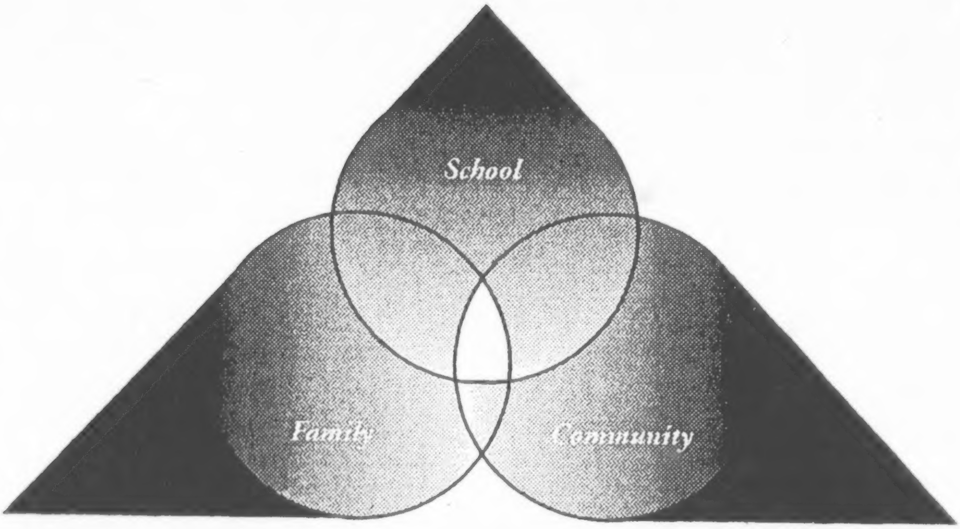
VII. EMPOWERING SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL AGENCIES AGAINST DISCRIMINATION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Chapter 22

Journey Toward Wholeness: Moving From Racial Diversity to Anti-Racism

Leon E. Spencer, Melvin Hoover, and Terry Oatts

Racism continues to be a major challenge and problem within the United States (Barndt, 1991; Feagin & Sikes, 1994). The lack of significant progress by the President's Commission on Race seems to reflect the struggle that many institutions face when confronting the issue of racism. The President's Commission seems to treat racism only at the individual level without providing insight into other manifestations of racism that are institutional and societal. This approach seems to reinforce the individual diversity concept without providing for a broader discussion of racial oppression from an institutional point of view. As the President's Commission moves forward, the United States continues to eliminate affirmative actions which is a tool designed to dismantle institutional racism. This is the result of the belief that systemic racism no longer exists. There seems to be a focus on creating diversity without addressing the institutional aspects of racism. This movement toward diversity without addressing the institutional aspects of racism is based on a myth decreeing that racism no longer exists, therefore people in fact will behave fairly in a voluntary manner and systems will reward people fairly and fully based on merit. There is a need for providing people with a tool for analysis that will address all the complexities of personal, institutional, and cultural racism.

Diversity versus Anti-Racism

The purpose of this article is to provide the reader with a model and tool for moving through a developmental process of becoming not just "racially/culturally diverse," but toward being "anti-racist/multi-cultural." Diversity and anti-racism are based on two different understandings of racism. "Diversity" is based on an analysis of personal/ individual racism, while anti-racist/multi-cultural on institutional racism. An understanding of the developmental nature of the journey from racism to anti- racist/ multi-cultural is helpful in providing a means of assessing where a community or organization is on its journey. This understanding is also helpful in the development of appropriate strategies for responding to racism from a personal, as well as an organizational framework (Avazian & Branding, 1991; Unitarian Universalist Association, 1996). Having a common language and an understanding of the systemic nature of personal, cultural and institutional racism is essential for the implementation of models for assessing and developing strategies for addressing racism (Barndt, 1991;

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Unitarian Universalist Association, 1996).

There is a real difference in working toward diversity and multiculturalism and doing anti-racism work. In order to better understand these dynamics and provide for an understanding of models and processes of moving toward being anti-racist/multicultural we need to differentiate between racism, anti-racism, diversity and multiculturalism. There is much confusion concerning the definition of racism, multiculturalism and diversity. Most of the controversy surrounds the definition of racism. All definitions include some form of prejudice, however some do not include the element of power and seem to be more focused on individual acts of prejudice rather than the systemic nature of racism as organized oppression. Racism is defined as racial prejudice plus institutional power (Barndt, 1991). It has to do with who has the power and who benefits from the power (Barndt, 1991; Helms, 1992; Rutstein, 1993). This definition presents a problem for many whites because they fail to see their collective power as white people (Barndt, 1991; Helms, 1992).

To effect change, an understanding of the nature of personal, institutional and cultural racism is necessary. Creating diverse and multicultural institutions is necessary but not sufficient without addressing the issues surrounding racism, particularly institutional racism. This results in the creation of a diverse and multicultural organization that is still racist in practices, policies and procedures. It keeps minorities powerless as these practices are played out in a covert fashion in the organizational system (Barndt, 1991).

To view racism solely as the perceived racial superiority of one group over another is an oversimplification of a considerably more complex phenomenon. Racism, operationally defined, involves the element of power. As such, racism becomes the tool by which systematic maintenance of the status quo as established by those in power is achieved (Barndt, 1991). Interestingly enough, racism comes in many variations. Personal, cultural, and institutional are generally regarded as the three forms or types of racism.

Personal, Cultural, and Institutional Racism

Personal racism, used interchangeably with individual racism, describes a subjective racism whereby an individual overtly and/or covertly harbors racist predispositions or engages in behaviors that promote one's own racial group as being superior (Helms, 1992). Cultural racism is characterized by the propagation of the cultural symbols, products, and achievements of one's own racial group while actively ignoring, minimizing, or even denigrating those of other groups (Helms, 1992). Institutional racism refers to the means by which the dominant race legitimizes its superior status.

Racism is effective because it is pervasive, and efforts to address it are cosmetic. Racism exists at each level (personal, cultural, institutional) and these levels are interrelated. For example, the climate of 1960s America shows the different levels of racism. Until the 1960s overt racism was accepted, and cultural racism was the norm, and institutional racism was unequivocally supported by the law. Resistance to change was articulated by detractors of the educational integration movement who cited the fact that whites did not want their children going to school with blacks (personal racism). The detractors went on to point out that whites were superior to blacks in every way. As such, to force whites to go to schools with illiterate blacks would not be fair to blacks or whites (cultural racism). Lastly, detractors simply rested on the law. It was legal to be segregated as along as facilities were equal (institutional racism).

Becoming an Anti-Racist Institution

As the nature of racism is systemic, any attempt, if it is to be successful, to stamp it out must be systemic in nature as well. Anti-racism is a position where both whites and blacks can come together and fight racism in all its manifestations. Unlike diversity which is a natural occurrence, anti-racism requires an intentionality on the part of persons and institutions. Multiculturalism and diversity without an anti-racist component do not result in the realization of equity.

Our observations about anti-racist multiculturalism, having been tested and reflected in institutional life, are grounded in the following operating assumptions and developmental explanations that are incorporated into the Continuum of Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution (see Figure 1) (Avazian and Branding, 1991).

1. There is a developmental continuum through which groups engaged in the transformation process of becoming anti-racist multicultural organizations move. That continuum can start with a very basic, monocultural exclusive dynamic, and move into a more passive, static " club" culture which may have a few token people of color.
2. From the previous level, a group can manifest a symbolic change with a commitment to being open. In this situation there is a desire for inclusion, even recruitment of people of color, but it remains symbolic with no contextual changes in culture, policies and decision making, and little awareness of the habit of privilege.
3. The next level to which groups move is an awakening, often with the help of training, which stimulates a deeper analysis and an expanding view of all those whom diversity might include. Although there is a desire on this level to eliminate discriminatory practices, it is implemented within the context of the norms and practices of the dominant group's world view, thus denying the contributions of the minority group when not consistent with the dominant group.
4. From the previous level, a group can move to structural change and redefining itself, sharing power, problem solving and shared decision making, struggling together to find the win/win solution, thus opening up all aspects of the group's life to examination.
5. When this developmental process is complete, a group is ready to become

Figure 1

CONTINUUM OF BECOMING AN ANTI-RACIST MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTION

Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Deficits → Tolerant Of Racial and Cultural Differences → Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Assets

MONOCULTURAL → MULTICULTURAL → ANTI-RACIST → ANTI-RACIST MULTICULTURAL

EXCLUSIVE	PASSIVE	SYMBOLIC CHANGE	ANALYTIC CHANGE	STRUCTURAL CHANGE	INCLUSIVE
EXCLUDING INSTITUTION	"CLUB" INSTITUTION	INCLUDING INSTITUTION	AWAKENING INSTITUTION	REDEFINING INSTITUTION	TRANSFORMED INSTITUTION
Enforces the racist status quo of complete exclusion and dominance of racial and ethnic peoples, teaching, decision making, policies, informal practices, and services.	Tolerant of a limited number of racial and ethnic peoples with "proper" perspective and credentials. Continues and maintains white power and privilege through its employment, teachings, decision making, policies, informal practices, and services. Often declares, "We don't have a problem."	Sees itself as committed to inclusion of racial and ethnic peoples, makes official pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity, but still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism and control. Symbolic inclusion; recruits for "someone of color" on committees or office staff, but "not those who make waves." Little or no contextual change in culture policies, and decision making.	Desires to eliminate discriminatory practices and inherent advantage. Growing sensitivity to differences; developes programs of anti-racism training. Expanding view of diversity may include disabled, elderly and children, lesbian and gays, and other socially oppressed groups. New spirit of mutual understanding of need to dismantle racism begins to emerge. But structures of racism still intact, and decision makers still conform to norms and practices derived from the dominant group's world view.	Goes beyond anti-racism consciousness and identity, it begins to act upon a new understanding of anti-racist multicultural perspective on all levels of its internal life and in its relationships to the community. Commits to structural transformation. Begins to audit all aspects of institutional life for full participation of racial and ethnic peoples, incuding their worldview, culture and lifestyles. New models, structures, policies and practices for inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing in the institution's life and work.	Anti-racist multicultural diversity is an institutional asset. Institution's life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices. Full participation in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interests. A sense of community and mutal caring. Commitment to continue to dismantle racism within institution and broader community. Allies with others in combating social oppression.

truly inclusive, understanding diversity as an asset and the group's culture. Their shared use of power in decision making reflects the contributions of diverse peoples and various world views. The sense of community and mutual caring feels authentic and shapes the life of the group. Such a group has become anti-racist and multicultural.

6. It is our assumption that groups can move back and forth on this continuum, but cannot skip a level in their developmental progress. It is also our assumption that no institution is currently at the final anti-racist multicultural level.
7. We further assume that with adequate support, coaching, and training, all groups that wish to, can undertake this transformation process.

Conclusion

It is popular today, and politically correct, for institutions to publicly state that they are racially inclusive, diverse, multicultural and are open institutions. However, to state this does not mean they are working against systemic racism. Furthermore, to become a racially diverse institution does not mean that institutional and cultural racism have been eliminated. In fact anti-racism begins to take hold beyond the stage of openness (which generally means diverse in appearance) that most institutions currently identify as their end goal. This proposed developmental continuum provides a diagnostic guide for individuals and organizations to assess where they truly are and to identify the steps needed to achieve an anti-racist multicultural identity. As the continuum demonstrates, merely implementing diversity or making short term efforts will not end systemic racism. A systematic examination with an intentional effort to implement all the developmental steps in the continuum is required for comprehensive change. ■

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Chapter 23

No Safe Places: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adolescents At Risk

Lynn Carroll and Thomas S. Serwatka

Most Americans are committed to the principles that all young people must be protected from physical harm, verbal abuse, and discrimination based on differences in their ethnicity, religion, culture, and abilities. In the same vein we support the idea that young people deserve to live in homes and neighborhoods that support their full development.

The majority of us would also advocate that schools, as an extension of the society, offer curricula that are comprehensive and which help students to develop accurate understandings of themselves, those who differ from them, and the world in which they live. We are also likely to support the goal that these curricula respond to the needs of the individual student, with close attention paid to the needs of those students who are at risk. Coming to consensus on principles and goals such as these is not all that difficult, even though we may have difficulty in determining how to operationalize them.

Unfortunately, albeit not surprisingly, when we add words like *sexual orientation* or *homosexuality* to discussions on these principles and goals, all bets are off as to whether we would confirm our original consensus. Even when consensus is reached on a given goal, such as protection from physical harm, discussions on operationalizing the goal or principle become even more contentious and heated than in other situations (see *Nabozny v. Podlesny,* 1996).

With failed promises of protection, nondiscrimination, and equity—gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) adolescents become *youth-at-risk.* Left to negotiate critical stages in their own development with little or no support and guidance, most of these young people feel as if there are no safe places for them. In response to this lack of support most GLB teens go through periods of extreme distress, isolation, and self-doubt. At times, significant numbers of these young people will also engage in highly self-destructive behaviors. Fortunately, despite these traumas, most GLB youths successfully make it to adulthood, a tribute more to the strength and resilience of the individual human spirit than to the circumstances under which they grow up.

Causes of Being At Risk

Cause and effect are often confused when dealing with issues surrounding GLB youth. Being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is not in-and-of-itself the cause of being at risk. Rather, researchers assert the at-risk status of GLB youth is caused by the struggle these young people experience in coming to understand their sexual identities in the contexts of non- supportive and often hostile environments (Bohan, 1996; Hetrick & Martin, 1987; Sears, 1991). As stated above, for most GLB adolescents there are no safe places in which to explore their sexual identities. These young people are unsupported and unprotected within their own communities and schools, and even within their own homes.

With the exploration of sexual identity coming earlier and earlier for GLB youth, in part due to the audible and heated cultural dialogue on issues related to sexual orientation, theorists assume that the risk factors for GLB youth continue to increase (Bohan, 1996). The literature also suggests that these risk factors are significantly higher for GLB racial and ethnic minority youths than for their majority GLB peers (Gibson, 1989; Savin-Williams, 1995).

Hetrick and Martin (1987) observed that while growing up, almost all GLB youths experience cognitive, social and emotional isolation. Urbie and Harbeck (1992) reported that these youth felt they existed "in a box" with no adults to talk to or peers like themselves to relate to, "stranded in an environment which shunned their very existence" (p. 19). For those youths that reside in geographic areas where there are too few informational resources, role models, and social support systems the sense of isolation, rejection, and shame becomes even more amplified.

While states and local school systems have begun to use slogans about *safe schools*, few of these entities have included concerns about GLB students in their definitions of safe schools (Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993). Quite to the contrary, Unks (1995) suggested that the public schools constitute one of the most dangerous environments for GLB adolescents when he stated: "high schools may be the most homophobic institutions in American society and woe be to anyone who would challenge the heterosexist premise on which they operate" (p. 5).

Research data provide support for Unk's view that the public school environment is unwelcoming and even hostile for GLB adolescents. In Massachusetts, the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth (1993) found that 97% of students in public high schools routinely heard anti-gay or homophobic remarks from peers and 53% heard similar remarks from school staff. In his study of teaching in the south, Sears (1991) found that 52% of prospective teachers felt uncomfortable working with openly lesbian or gay students. McFarland (1993) reported similar attitudes for school counselors.

The literature tells us that the unsafe nature of school extends well beyond rhetoric and into acts of physical violence. In reporting on cases of physical violence against GLB students writer Mark Walsh (1997) presents the now classic case of Jamie Nabozny (*Nabozny v Podlesny*, 1996. This case serves to illustrate both the occurrences of public school violence and the inaction of school administrators when confronted with these acts (April 24, 1966). In winning his million dollar law suit against the Ashland Wisconsin School District, Nabozny told the court of a mock rape by fellow students and of being assaulted and urinated on. When he complained about these events to school administrators, Nabozny stated that his middle school principle said: "that if I was going to be openly gay, I had to expect this. In high school, I was just kind of pushed out of the [principal's] office" (Walsh, 1996, p. 2). While, fortunately, few GLB students face this level of humiliation, large numbers of these young people do report being the victims of some level of physical abuse and harassment in the school setting. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (1988) found that 40% of lesbians and 25% of gay males responding to their survey reported being victims of such instances.

As bad as their school experiences may be, for some GLB youths these experiences may be no worse than their experiences at home. For these youths home can feel every bit as hostile and unsafe as school was for Jamie Nabozny.

In our own interviews and discussions with GLB adolescents, we continue to hear the same stories repeated over and over. In most cases these young people elect not to tell their parents about their sexual orientation. This decision is born out of the fear that disclosing this information would destroy whatever relationships they have with their parents, be that good or bad. In a number of cases these youths fear that they would be forced to leave home or subjected to equally devastating treatments if their parents found out. Research suggests that for some these fear are, in fact, well founded. In his study Remafedi (1987) found that 26% of the gay adolescents did run away from, or were asked to leave home because of family conflicts over sexual orientation.

For some GLB youths it may not be necessary for them to tell their parents that they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual to be censured. The mere display of any of those characteristics associated with their sexual orientation may be sufficient for these youth to be ostracized by parents and family members. It is certainly not uncommon for the effeminate teenage boy to be told that he is a disappointment to his parents or to be called *sissy* by siblings.

Feelings of isolation, ostracism, and disapproval from family members are not the most severe manifestations of an unsafe home environment. In a survey conducted by the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force (1992) 19% of gay male and 25% of the lesbian respondents reported that they had been physically attacked by family members because of their sexual orientation. In addition, other researchers examining suicide rates among GLB adolescents have found that over 40% of the adolescents who attempted suicide attributed their attempts to problems with their families (Remafedi, Farrow, & Deisher, 1991).

The links for GLB youth between conflicts at home and being at risk may be most clearly understood in the personal stories of GLB adolescents and their families. For us one particular story of a young lesbian who was raised in a religiously conservative home painfully and dramatically makes this point. After this young woman attempted suicide as an adolescent, because she was fearful that her parents would find out about her sexual orientation, she was sent to see a psychiatrist. In explaining this event she told us: "My church told me I am a sinner, my school told me I am abnormal, the law tells me I have no rights. My parents would have kicked me out of their house if they knew about me, and my psychiatrist asked me why I took the pills?"

Outcomes of Being At Risk

Although most GLB adolescents do make it to adulthood safely, it is not without paying a price for having grown up in a non-supportive and hostile environment. The outcomes of growing up homosexual or bisexual with no support from home, school, or community are at best perplexing, often devastating, and at times even fatal. While problems of depression, suicide, risky sexual behaviors, family conflict, and substance abuse are common to the period of adolescence in general, the literature documents unusually high incidence of these problems among homosexual and bisexual youth (Gibson, 1989: Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Urbie & Harbeck, 1992; Remafedi, Farrow & Deisher, 1991; Sears, 1991).

Increased incidence of runaway behavior and of homelessness are two of the often noted consequences of growing up gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In contrast to the fact that the occurrence of homosexuality within the general population is assumed to be somewhere between five to ten percent, a survey by Victim Services (1996) found that 36% of homeless youth self identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. And as noted earlier, the percentage of GLB youth who run away because of family conflicts well exceeds the percentage of youth with this sexual orientation.

Engagement in risky sexual behaviors is another of the self- destructive behaviors that may result from growing up a bisexual, gay, or lesbian within our culture. In their survey of youth in New York, Lebolt and O'Sullivan (1996) found that 42% of young people who engaged in street work or prostitution also self identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. GLB youth are four to eight times more likely to engage in these risky and self destructive behaviors than their heterosexual peers. In 1997 the Center for Disease Control and Research (CDC) reported data which suggest that unsafe sex practices among gay and bisexual male adolescents may account for 57% or more of recent AIDS cases diagnosed among 20 to 24 year old males.

Data also provides evidence that the use of alcohol and other drugs is greater among GLB youth than among heterosexual peers. Hunter and colleagues (cited in Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network, 1998), in their study of New York youth, found rates of alcohol use at 83% and 68% and rates of other drug use at 56% and 46% for lesbian and gay adolescents, respectively.

National data on suicides among adolescents show that GLB adolescents are significantly more likely to engage in these acts of desperation than are their heterosexual peers. Researchers have reported rates of suicide attempts by GLB teens ranging from 20 to 40 per cent (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Durby, 1994; Hetrick & Martin, 1987). These data indicate that GLB youth are five times more likely to attempt and three times more likely to succeed at suicide than their heterosexual peers (Gibson, 1989).

Remedies for At-Risk Behaviors

As with most complex issues facing society there are no magic wands to solve the problems of GLB youth. Despite general societal trends toward more tolerance for and acceptance of sexual orientation differences, schools and other agencies which deal with youth are reluctant to move in this same direction. Quite to the contrary, with rare and notable exceptions, these agencies continue to implement policies that deny equity for and protection of GLB youth. Ironically, as these schools and agencies continue such policies, they do so under the banner of protecting children.

The implication of this lack of movement for the concerned professional is one of individual responsibility. The histories of successful GLB adults often include stories about the one teacher, counselor, or other such professional who did find a way to reach out, listen, and help.

Because GLB youths typically present themselves as one individual at a time, it is important for concerned professionals to develop strategies for working individually with these youths. Because many of these youth will sit silently in classroom after classroom, it is also important for professionals to develop strategies for making their classrooms or offices supportive of inclusion. In his on-line piece, Lipkin (1998) offers a set of suggestions for professionals who are willing to take actions to help GLB youth. In offering his suggestions, he frames them on two continua: One continuum defines actions as extending from low-risk to high-risk, and the other continuum helps professionals understand what they can do to inform themselves, their classrooms, and their schools or agencies.

Certainly the status quo is often the most comfortable place for most professionals. Unfortunately, in the case of GLB youths the cost of the status quo is always high and at times life threatening. ■

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EMPOWERING YOUTH-AT-RISK WITH SKILLS FOR SCHOOL AND LIFE

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